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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE,

&c., &c.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

AS DISPLAYED

IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

28.

OF

SAINT PAUL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN RETIREMENT."

"BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM."

"I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH."

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PREFACE.

THIS little Treatise has no pretensions to novelty, being on subjects which form the daily meditation of the devout Christian, and from which he derives his purest enjoyment: neither does the Author presume to vie with those, whose works on the Life of St. Paul, have enriched the stores of Sacred Literature.

His design in publishing these thoughts on the Experience of the Apostle, is, in some feeble measure, to exhibit the beauty of Evangelical Religion: by bringing into one view, the varied excellencies of his character; and by unfolding those principles of faith and love, which, through the Spirit, made him so great a blessing to mankind.

Christianity is the religion of the heart. Every doctrine of the Gospel is a sacred spring of holiness. In these pages, the Author has therefore endeavoured to treat these mysteries of grace, not controversially, but practically; not as subjects for speculation, but as sources of peace and joy.

To the spiritual reader, no apology will be requisite, for the numerous extracts which are inserted from the Writings of St. Paul. These form the intrinsic value of the Work. They are precious Jewels, however humble may be the casket in which they are conveyed.

What language can so well describe the inward joys and griefs of the Apostle, as his own pathetic addresses to the churches of the saints. By them, he being dead yet speaketh.

May He, whose Power is manifested in the weakest instruments, be pleased to render this humble tribute of affection to His cause subservient to the purposes of His glory.

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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE,

AS DISPLAYED IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ST. PAUL.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"Blest is The Book whose leaves display,
Jesus the Life, the Truth, the Way;
Read it with diligence, with prayer;
Search it, and you will find HIM there."

AT a period like the present, when knowledge is rapidly increasing, through the prevalence of education and the facilities of the press: when Infidelity, alive to these advantages, is insinuating its poison in every form: when errors are unhappily springing up, and divisions are weakening the Christian Church:—what a treasure is the WORD OF GOD.

Here we have Light to dissipate our dark-

ness;—Truth, to guide us amidst the mazes of error;—Consolations, to gladden us in a world of misery.

The Bible is the Revelation of a Father's love—the Expression of Jehovah's grace to sinners—the Depository of heavenly blessings—the Charter of our highest privileges:—The Bible is the religion of Protestants—the glory of our Churches—the Poor Man's Friend. Every thing sublime in conception, and tender in expression, is to be found in the Sacred Scriptures.

The Eternal Jehovah has there revealed Himself, as clothed with majesty and honour; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; in whose sight the heavens are not clean:—and there he has manifested forth his glory, as mighty to save; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

In that Blessed Volume, Mercy is seen to arrest the arm of Justice, and all the tenderness of the Father is displayed in the person of the Son. Love breathes throughout its sacred pages; for even when he declares: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,"—the severe reproof is but "the graver countenance of love." Can we then neglect the Scriptures, which contain the richest treasures, compared with which, all else is poor indeed.

When the Creator of the world becomes an Author, his word must be as perfect as his work. The heavens declare the glory of God, and so does the Volume of his Truth. To the humble seeker after God, the Lord makes himself known as a God of grace and mercy; for the Scriptures are

able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit no sooner applies the truth as it is in Jesus with power to the heart, than the desert is made to rejoice and to blossom as the rose; the soul is beautified with salvation, and all its powers are consecrated to the service of its Redeemer; "for the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Hence, David, from happy experience could say: "By them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Before his resurrection Jesus prayed in behalf of his disciples: "Holy Father, sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And after his resurrection, by his own Almighty Power, he opened their understanding, to understand the Scriptures. Happy then shall we be, if, in unison with the Psalmist we can say: "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day. Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Thy word hath quickened me."

Every thing around us is given to change; sickness impairs the hue of health; adversity, the prospect of pleasant years; earthly friends may vary in their aspect toward us, — at one time, bestowing the testimony of affection, at another, grieving us by a chilling slight. But in the

Volume of his Truth, our heavenly Father gives the sweet assurance, that HE CHANGETH NOT. His Love, his Faithfulness, his Power are infinite. To all his adopted children his promises in Christ are yea, and in Him amen, to the glory of his grace; for Jesus is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; having loved his own, he loveth them unto the end.

When Ishmael was dying from thirst in the wilderness of Beersheba, God opened the eyes of Hagar, and she saw a well of water, which imparted strength to her child.

We also are perishing in a thirsty land where no water is. God graciously opens our eyes to behold that well of salvation which he has provided for perishing sinners. With joy he enables us to draw forth its restoring water, and receiving in faith this gift of grace, our souls are quickened, renewed in holiness, and strengthened to serve God in the Gospel of his Son.

O how can we sufficiently praise our loving Saviour for the blessings which he reveals and imparts to us in his Holy Word.

Whatever man touches, he defiles, because his nature is corrupted through the fall. All that proceeds from God is holy. "Every word of God is pure." So David found it. "Thy word is *very pure*, therefore thy servant loveth it." It was a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path. He rejoiced at the Word of God, as one that findeth great spoil. In his estimation, it was more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; to his spiritual taste it was sweeter than honey and the

honeycomb. He treasured up the Divine Word in his mind, and had it ready on every occasion. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way."

There is no situation in which a believer can be placed, however dark or intricate, however slippery or perilous, but in the Bible he will find appropriate guidance and adequate support. For, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

The Word of God is wonderful in its operation on the heart and conscience, through the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, being quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. "Is not my word like as a fire," saith the Lord, and "like the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

As fire hardens the clay, and melts the wax; as it consumes the dross, and purifies the gold, so does the Word of the Lord. Pharaoh was judicially hardened; David was graciously softened. The former being left in righteous judgment to the natural working of his heart, resisted the Divine Word, and was destroyed. The latter, being deeply humbled through grace, under the pointed reproofs of the Prophet, confessed his sin with penitential sorrow, and obtained forgiveness.

Some do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor

the power of God, and perish for lack of knowledge. Others, being unlearned and unstable, wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction. While others again, hold the truth in unrighteousness, and perish in their own corruption. But in the midst of all this ignorance and perversion, "the ways of the Lord are *right*, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein." All who will not submit to the authority of God's Word, shall be broken by the power of his wrath; but, "to this man," saith the Lord "will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

The Word of God and prayer are the divinely appointed instruments in the hand of the Spirit, for defeating the machinations of Satan, and establishing the kingdom of righteousness in the earth, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man.

This was strikingly verified in the success of the Apostles, who, having declared—"We will give ourselves *continually* to prayer, and to the ministry of the word,"—saw the immediate fruit of this devotedness to their work; for St. Luke informs us, that the word of God increased, that the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Our hearts are evil; we are surrounded by temptations to evil; and the Evil One is ever on the watch to destroy us. Where then must we flee, and to whom must we look for safety? Jesus our refuge; his love and power can shield and

save us. He is the Captain of our salvation; the mighty Conqueror over sin and death.

When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus repelled his assaults by wielding the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. To each temptation addressed to his mind, he answered,—"*it is written;*" and the Scripture thus powerfully applied, drove back the enemy, till he departed from him, foiled and vanquished.

How strengthening, how consoling is the Word of Truth. With this spiritual armoury, this divine treasury, we shall be fortified for the conflict, equipped for our pilgrimage, and upheld amid the dangers of this evil world.

As the traveller, in an unknown land, needs a faithful guide; as the mariner, traversing dangerous seas, requires a chart and a compass: so we need a guide and directory whilst passing through this world of peril. God has mercifully given us this help.

In his Holy Word, our loving Father has made ample provision for the wants of Zion's pilgrims; while the Spirit, shining into our hearts, enables us clearly to perceive, through his revealed truth, the consecrated way to heaven—Jesus Christ, the righteous. With what fervour then should we bless our God and Saviour for all these tokens of his kindness towards us.

Are we bowed down under a sense of the guilt of sin?

It is written: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The blood of Jesus

Christ cleanseth from all sin. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Do we dread a repulse from the mercy-seat?

It is written: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. The Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Is our heart trembling, under the consciousness of utter helplessness, and at the sight of Satan's power?

It is written: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. My grace is sufficient for thee. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under thy feet shortly."

Are we groaning under the workings of indwelling sin?

It is written: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death; I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Do we long for faith, and love, and every grace?

It is written: "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Ask and ye shall receive, seek and

ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, believing, ye shall receive."

Are we panting after the Saviour's presence?

It is written: "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings. If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Do we feel our need of spiritual wisdom and divine direction?

It is written: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Are we afraid of any temporal calamity?

It is written: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover thee with his feathers; and under his wings shalt thou trust: his Truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Call upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

Does the world frown upon us, and persecute us for Jesus' sake?

It is written: "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law: fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. I, even I, am He

that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be as grass, and forgetteth the Lord thy Maker. But I will forewarn you, whom ye shall fear. Fear Him, which, when he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you for my sake: rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Do we tremble at the thought of death, and an approaching judgment?

It is written: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

What a precious book must that be which can thus provide for every trial and need of the Christian.

There is no conceivable state of mind which

we may be in, no circumstance in which we can be placed, no exercise of faith and patience which we may be called to endure, but in the Word of God we shall find direction, comfort, and support equal to our day.

Surely then, we should daily prize this Word of Salvation, which reveals Jesus in all his fulness, the world in all its emptiness, and heaven in all its glory. There, as in a glass, we are taught to know ourselves, and with this lamp, we are enabled to walk in safety, amid the dangers which surround our path. O that we may have grace to receive the truth into our hearts, and to embrace it in the simplicity of faith.

The doctrines and precepts, the histories and characters, the promises and threatenings contained in the Bible, are all designed to enlighten and purify the soul.

Blessed will that period be, when every human being shall possess the Word of Life, and when every heart shall feel its regenerating power. Lord, hasten on this long-expected day; a day of peace and joy, when all mankind shall love as brethren, and unite to glorify thy name. O send out thy light and thy truth, let thy word have free course and be glorified, by the conversion of the world unto thee.

Jesus, who is the Light of the World, shines to us through the pages of Eternal Truth. The Bible is full of Christ; it leads our souls to him as the source of its promises, the subject of its prophecies, and the substance of its revealed glories; for it pleased the Father that in Him should

all fulness dwell,—fulness of light, fulness of love, fulness of power, fulness of glory.

"Jesu', my Saviour, in thy face
The essence lives of ev'ry grace;
All things beside which charm the sight,
Are shadows tipt with glowworm light.

"Thy beauty Lord, th' enraptur'd eye
Which fully views it, first must die;
Then let me die, through death to know,
That joy I cannot taste below."

It has been well remarked, that "there are peculiarities belonging to Sacred History, so remote from every thing seen among men, and such an unearthly character is given even to its relation of ordinary concerns, that the most superficial observer can scarcely fail to distinguish it from every human production.

"Its true and faithful portraiture of our own nature, its appeals to the heart of the reader, alone suffice to establish the observation.

"There is a knowledge of the human heart, *a master key* to its subtlest recesses, which not only surpasses human penetration in its origin, but astonishes, while it terrifies the individual, whose bosom is laid open to his own inspection, and who finds himself a stranger, where he had thought himself most at home. Not a lurking passion is suffered to remain undetected in its living pictures. Motives, which we should be ashamed to avow, are dragged before our conscience in the history of another; and while his sentence is passed, we feel a personal condemnation."

Thus the Bible speaks to the heart through the understanding; for, these things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Thrice happy then is the heart in which the word of Christ dwells richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Such a heart shall be kept in perfect peace, while passing through this vale of tears. Trials may assail, and griefs may pierce its tenderest part, but all shall still be well. Faith and hope will sustain the believer amidst the swelling billows, till Jesus shall place his servant beyond the reach of sorrow.

"Does the Lord of glory speak
To his creatures here below;
And may souls so frail and weak
All his gracious dealings know?
Does the blessed Bible bring,
Tidings from our heavenly King?

"O with what intense desire,
Should we search that sacred book;
Here, our zeal should never tire,
Here we should delight to look
For the rules by mercy given,
To conduct our souls to heaven.

"Shall not he, that humbly seeks,
All the light of truth discern?
Do we not, when Jesus speaks
Feel our hearts within us burn?
For his soul-reviving voice
Bids the mourner to rejoice.

"Lord, thy teaching grace impart,
That we may not read in vain;

Write thy precepts on our heart,
Make thy truths and doctrines plain ;
Let the message of thy love
Guide us to thy rest above." *

* The Author is indebted to the Rev. W. H. Bathurst, M. A., Rector of Barwick-in-Elmet, for several Original Hymns, extracted from his Collection of "Psalms and Hymns, for public and private use;" which are as spiritual in feeling, as they are beautiful in composition.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS.

OF all the records of divine grace, which are treasured up in the Holy Scriptures, none more strikingly exhibits its sovereignty and power, than the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

To the believer in Jesus, it must be a source of edification and encouragement, to trace the experience of this chosen vessel, from his first reception of the Saviour, to the close of his eventful life.

When writing to the Christians at Corinth, he could say through the grace bestowed upon him: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." May we have grace to resemble this holy man, in his spiritual-mindedness and devotedness to the Redeemer.

Here, is the faith and patience of the saints. As grace brings them out of darkness into light, so will grace conduct them to the realms of glory. Entering the celestial city with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall see the King in his beauty, and raise the head-stone of the spiritual temple with shoutings, crying: "grace, grace unto it."

While viewing the character of the Apostle in his unconverted state, we must be struck with that more than Egyptian darkness which beclouded his mind.

He was of the straitest sect of the Pharisees, who in general were bigoted, cruel, and high-minded. All religion and kindness were confined within the bounds of their own party; and the first principle which they taught their new converts was: That none but they were godly, and that all other persons were worthless. They therefore endeavoured to inspire them with zeal and fierceness against all who differed from them; so that if any one dared to speak favourably of Jesus of Nazareth, he was put out of the Synagogue, and persecuted even unto death.

For the appearance of greater sanctity, they not only fasted often, and made long prayers, but separated themselves from the herd of mankind; from whom they were distinguished by badges peculiar to their sect, as, long robes, broad phylacteries, large fringes, and borders of their garments. They were active and diligent in what cost them little; and so contrived the scheme of their religion, that what they did might be seen of men to the best advantage. They coveted, and obtained the praise of men. Such was the character and religion of Saul the Pharisee.

Being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, he was well acquainted with the writings of Moses and the Prophets; but he knew not the true spiritual meaning of those prophecies which relate to the character, work, sufferings, and glory of the Mes-

siah. So true it is, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Is not this our condition till taught of God to know the misery of our fallen state? We never value the Saviour till we feel our need of him; for they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

What cause we have to bless God, if the Spirit has graciously opened our eyes to see our guilt, and made our hearts to feel a genuine sorrow for sin. Jesus will then be dear, yea infinitely precious to our souls. His name will be as ointment poured forth.

Saul was zealous for the Law, as a covenant of works, but he saw not the glory of Jesus, who is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Though scrupulously exact in Pharisaical observances, he could overcome his scruples, and unite with infidel Sadducees to suppress the religion of Jesus, just as Herod and Pilate overcame their mutual enmity when combining to effect his crucifixion.

In the fulness of time, the Sun of Righteousness arose to bless the earth with healing in his wings. By good old Simeon he was hailed as a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel. But, "the light shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. The promised Deliverer came unto his own, and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

The kings of the earth took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying: let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

And in this our day, how many are fighting against Christ and his Gospel. Satan has his emissaries, who are busily employed in attacking Christianity by bold assertions and daring blasphemies: while others, under the garb of orthodoxy, are opposing the humble yet zealous preacher of the Truth, that *real friend and builder up of the Church*, as if he were nothing better than a troubler in Israel.

The Gospel of Peace is the innocent occasion of this fiery opposition, agreeably to our blessed Saviour's own declaration: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather division. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I came not to send peace, but a sword."

The real cause of this warfare, lies hid in the enmity of the carnal heart, and in the influence which Satan exercises over the minds of them who believe not the Truth.

How frequently is this verified in worldly families, when any of their members have been brought to a deep concern for the salvation of the soul. No sweetness of spirit, no humility of mind, no act of self-denial, no endeavour to oblige, can render the obnoxious individuals pleasing in the eyes of their carnal relatives. A frown, a sneer, or a laugh is frequently employed to intimidate or

shame the young believer in Jesus. Sometimes this hatred manifests itself by expulsion from the paternal dwelling, and exclusion from the father's will. Even a mother, in her blinded enmity to the Truth, can deliver her once beloved child into the bloody arms of the Inquisition. Superstition, bigotry, and worldly hatred have in all ages wasted the sheep of Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service; and these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Such has been, and such is the spirit of the world,—a determination to retain the forms of Christianity, and to crush its power. The offence of the cross has not ceased. In many countries where Papal darkness reigns, the old enmity is still in vigorous operation. The man of sin cannot endure the light of Truth, nor those who shine as lights in the world. Even in this Protestant England—this land of Bibles,—from whence the true light shines with such a glorious lustre into surrounding nations, the spirit of persecution is not extinct. It still works in the bosom of the bigoted, the carnal, and the infidel opposer of the Truth.

Through the mercy of our God, we have long

been protected from open violence, and are yet privileged to serve him without bodily fear. But who can tell, how soon the concealed evil may be permitted in righteous judgment to break forth into action? Nothing but Almighty Power can restrain the malice of Satan, and the bitter enmity of the natural heart. Are not dark clouds gathering around us? Do we not hear the awful sounds of an approaching storm?

A persecuting spirit is not from above; urged on by the powers of darkness, it springs from ignorance of the true God, from pride, and from that deadly root of all evil, unbelief.

James and John felt its workings, when they desired that fire might descend from heaven, and consume a Samaritan village, because its inhabitants refused to receive their Divine Master. Jesus rebuked them, and said; "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

This blinded state of heart, which fills the earth with misery and bloodshed, was awfully displayed in the spirit and conduct of Saul. St. Luke, the inspired writer of the Acts of the Apostles, informs us, that when Saul was a young man, the clothes of those who stoned Stephen were laid at his feet; that he consented to the death of this holy disciple; that he made havock of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.

Whether Saul was any further engaged in the death of Stephen does not appear. However,

the circumstance recorded by St. Luke, of his guarding the clothes of his murderers, loudly proclaims his approbation of the deed. Let us never forget, that God looks chiefly at the heart; and if the vote be passed *there*, he writes the man guilty, though he stir no farther. It is easy to murder another by a silent wish, or a passionate desire, as Jesus has declared in his searching Sermon on the Mount, and St. John, in his first Epistle.

In all moral actions, whether good or evil, God regards the will; and reckons the man a companion in sin, who, though he may never actually join in it, yet inwardly applauds and likes it.

The storm thus begun, increased rapidly. A violent persecution afflicted and dispersed the Christians at Jerusalem, who went every where preaching the Word. Like all the dispensations of God towards his Church, it was over-ruled for the more rapid extension of the Gospel, just as a scattered fire increases the conflagration.

The rage of Saul was so fierce at this period, that in the strong language of the sacred historian, he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. Not satisfied with his own anathemas, he went unto the high-priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, be might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

How wonderful is the divine forbearance. Truly God is strong and *patient*. Though in his wisdom, he may permit the persecutor's fury to rage for a season, yet, through his power, he maketh

the wrath of man to praise him; and in his love, he over-ruleth all for the purifying and enlargement of his Church. He who said to the mighty ocean: Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,—can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. All hearts are under the divine control, and can be chained or changed according to His purpose, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own Will.

In every age, God is pleased to manifest his power either in the conversion or the destruction of sinners; for He, who ruleth over all, must and shall be feared by all intelligent creatures. Oh that the prayers of his Church may be speedily answered by the ushering in of that period, when His name shall be hallowed; His kingdom come; and His will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

The time was now arrived when Infinite Love purposed to make such a manifestation of its glory, as would fill heaven with joy and earth with praise. The enemy had come in like a flood, but the Spirit of the Lord was about to lift up a standard against him. While Saul was hastening to Damascus, full of persecuting fury, and intending to strike a deadly blow at the infant Church of Christ, thinking thereby, "to do God service;" Jesus met him in the way. Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about him, above the brightness of the sun. The fiery bigot, checked in his career, fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? He said: Who art thou, Lord?

And the Lord said: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Saul, trembling and astonished, said: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said: Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Being unable to see for the glory of that light, he was led by the hand of them that were with him, and came to Damascus.

What a display of sovereign grace is here presented to our view. The bloody persecutor now lies prostrate at the feet of Jesus. Though his bodily eyes were darkened, the film of ignorance was removed from his mind, the enmity of his heart was destroyed, the strong-holds of unbelief and pride were thrown down, and he became teachable and submissive like a little child.

"Over the raging waves of human will,
The Saviour's Spirit walk'd;—and all was still."

Have we ever experienced this converting grace of Jesus? Has a divine light ever darted into our minds, showing us, by its irresistible

power, the wretchedness of our condition, and the glory of Emmanuel?

Have we been brought in humble submission to the foot of the cross, and there, found pardon and peace, and joy, and rest to our souls?

Until this great work be done, we are exposed to the curses of the Law, and the eternal vengeance of a Holy God. But love invites us to his throne, and all who touch the sceptre of his grace shall live.

To prepare the way for Saul's admission into the Christian Church, Jesus appeared in a vision to Ananias, a disciple dwelling at Damascus, and commanded him to enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, that he might put his hand on him, and restore him to sight. Ananias, dreading the interview, replied: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem, and here, he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." Jesus graciously dissipated his fears: "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Then Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. The God of our

fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that JUST ONE, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For, thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

Saul, thus adopted into the family of God, through faith in Jesus, was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. "He straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God; showing first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things, than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

Can we then be surprised that all who heard him preach the unsearchable riches of Christ should be amazed, saying: "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

The conversion of the heart to God is the work of Omnipotence. It is described in Scripture by the boldest figures, being compared to a transition from darkness to light, from death to life; to

a new birth, and a new creation. The heart of stone is changed into a heart of flesh, and the haughty rebel is converted into an obedient child.

O let us adore the infinite loving-kindness of our God and Saviour, who delighteth in mercy, not desiring the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his way and live.

Lord! what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him. Wretched fallen man, whose heart rises in rebellion against thee, might *justly* have been left to perish in his sins. But oh! how infinite is the love which rescues us from deserved woe, and raises us to the highest seat in glory.

Can we meditate on this grace and not feel humbled and thankful? Alas! so hard are our hearts, that even the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion of our loving Saviour, can be viewed without emotion. Grace alone can melt the rocky heart. Saul was softened, his obduracy was removed, and his darkness dissipated by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

Who then need despair, when the bloody Saul is accepted and saved? Oh! that the Eternal Spirit may descend in all his saving influence on this ruined world; then will earth once more resemble heaven, where Jehovah is loved, and honoured, and obeyed with constancy and delight.

Lord! look upon the covenant of peace, that bow which surrounds thy throne of mercy, for the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations. Stir up the wills of thy faithful people, subdue the wills of thine enemies; draw all hearts to thyself,

till all the kingdoms of this world shall acknowledge Christ to be the Lord.

The sacred historian informs us that Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that Jesus is very Christ.

Thus his growth in grace, and in the knowledge of his God and Saviour, evidenced the soundness of his conversion, and the reality of his faith. The scriptural evidence of saving faith is love,—love to Christ, and love to his people. How heart-searching was the question of Jesus to Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" How distinctive the badge which he has given us of our discipleship: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another."

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the faith of the Gospel is a standing testimony to the truth of Christianity; and will remain, to the end of time, a monument of Almighty Power.

With gratitude, he himself declared to the Galatian church this act of the divine sovereignty: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The whole was from Him, who will be gracious to whom he will be gracious. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness can alone shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Like Saul, we may be zealous for our own views, and jealous for the interests of our own

party: like him, we may blindly attach merit to a spirit of persecution, and think that to exterminate those who differ from us, is to do God service; but is this the spirit which should dwell and rule in the children of God? Would not such a state of heart prove us to be carnal, however flaming our religious profession might be?

Nothing could be less prepared for a cordial reception of the Gospel than the mind of Saul, when journeying toward Damascus. At this memorable period, he was utterly destitute of true repentance and saving faith. He saw in Christ no beauty that he should desire him.

The Lambs were daily sacrificed upon the temple-altar, but he never felt the need of a better sacrifice to take away sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

The high-priest entered every year into the holy place with the blood of others, but he never looked beyond the type to the true Melchisedec, whose atonement and intercession alone could open the gates of heaven, and procure for him an admittance there.

The Scriptures were read every Sabbath-Day, but to him they were a sealed book.

Expecting a temporal Prince, whose reign should surpass that of David in victories, and that of Solomon in splendour, he spurned at the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to the office of Messiah.

Full of overweening thoughts of his own excellence, he could not brook the idea of being saved through the righteousness of another, and especially through him, whom the Rulers had

condemned as a malefactor, and crucified between two thieves. Scrupulously observant of the letter, he was indifferent to the *spiritual* requirements of the Law. Hence he felt no humbling convictions on account of the *inward* workings of evil. His conscience was at ease, so long as he could maintain a decent exterior, and enjoy the reputation of superior sanctity. Every unholy passion, directed against the Son of God and his redeemed people, was extolled as praise-worthy zeal and meritorious service. The more he wasted the despised sect of the Nazarenes, the higher he rose in his own estimation, and in that of the Rulers.

Such were the self-righteous feelings of Saul, when arrested by the blessed Jesus in his mad career. What power, short of Omnipotençe, could have effected so sudden, so great, so universal a change. It was truly the work of that Eternal Word who said, amidst the darkness of chaos,—"Let there be light, and there was light." He was made a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things passed away, and all things became new. His proud heart was humbled; his breast, so lately filled with rage, now overflowed with love; his mind, once so dark, was now enlightened to see his vileness; and so earnest were his cries for mercy, that the Searcher of hearts himself bore testimony to his sincerity, by declaring to the fearful Ananias:—"Behold, he prayeth."

Strictly moral in his conduct, and well versed in the traditions of the elders, zealous for God, and ready to extinguish every spark of supposed heresy; Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion, was like the

whited sepulchre, beautiful to look at. Yet, with all these Jewish attractions, his heart was not right with God. While he made many and long prayers, he never breathed the contrite sigh; while he thanked God that he was not as other men, he never cried from a broken heart:—"God be merciful to me a sinner." In this state of blind unbelief and spiritual insensibility, rejecting the mercy of God, and the Saviour of mankind, he would have filled up the measure of his iniquities, had not sovereign grace snatched him as a brand from the burning, and made him a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

Is the case of Saul an uncommon one in this our day? Alas! no.

Thousands possess the Bible who are ignorant of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer: thousands attend the ordinances of the Gospel who never feel its power: thousands are zealous for the religion of their fathers, who yet ridicule such of their brethren, as excel them in the spirituality of their affections, and the holiness of their lives.

During the reign of Papal darkness, what thousands glutted themselves with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, exulting, with Princes and Bishops over the Sheep of Christ, rejoicing to see the *sacred* fires of the Inquisition lighted up, to consume the bodies of the the faithful, who protested against the errors of Church of Rome. The Beast, though wounded, is not yet dead. The ancient enmity to the light of Truth is still in active operation.

In every age the heart of man is the same unvarying spring of evil. Under every covering, whether it be that of outward morality, or amiability of temper, it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Every garment of nature's weaving, how beautiful soever its texture or colouring, is too scanty wholly to conceal the inbred corruption. Divine Truth, with unsparing hand, tears away the flimsy veil, and discovers the heart in all its vileness.

"Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But whilst He who is THE TRUTH, thus exposes to herself the fallen church of Laodicea, he most graciously adds: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

This exposure, however humiliating, was the fruit of covenant love: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent." And now, behold a display of condescending mercy, which should move every heart, and awaken every Christian feeling: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." O! that all may listen to the voice of mercy, inviting the soul to sweet communion with the Saviour, before it be

exchanged for the thunders of the day of Judgment. Nothing will abide the fiery trial, but the gold which Jesus promises to bestow. True faith, producing its happy fruits, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, who, like the refiner's fire, shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. How painful is the thought, that the hearts of dying creatures should be so averse from that religion, which breathes nothing but peace and good-will toward man. The religion of Jesus is emphatically the religion of love,—divine love embodied in its most endearing form. True happiness increases, as the power of the Gospel in the heart increases. The more we resemble Christ, in his meekness and humility, in his love and obedience, the more we shall enjoy the presence of God, and the sweeter anticipations we shall have of future glory.

Our aversion to holiness proves us to be the children of the fall. Our nature is radically corrupt. We may respect the decencies of religion, whilst pride, yea, even hatred to real godliness, rankles in our breast.

Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus, and so it is with every mere nominal Christian, who is a stranger to the plague of his own heart, and has never felt the need of a better righteousness than his own, to justify him in the sight of God.

There is a little flock, saved by grace, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. Saul was brought into the fold, and so will all who betake themselves, through grace, to the good Shepherd.

Writing to these redeemed ones, St. Jude gives this affectionate exhortation: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

May all who read these pages drink deeply into the spirit of this apostolic exhortation, that receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, they may join the glorified Church in heaven, in ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

CHAPTER III.

PAUL'S HUMILIATING CONFESSION. THE OPPOSITION HE MET WITH FROM THE JEWS. HIS RECEPTION AT JERUSALEM BY THE APOSTLES. THE NATURAL ENERGY OF HIS CHARACTER.

PRIDE is the great opposer of regenerating grace, and would, if unsubdued, for ever close the heart against the entrance of the Spirit. By an act of sovereign love, the proud sinner is made sensible of his guilt and helplessness. The Spirit, through his convincing light, empties him of all overweening thoughts of his own righteousness and strength; while the Law, in which he trusted, affords him no shelter from the arm of Justice. By its spirituality and extent, reaching to the inmost motions of the will, the Law pronounces his condemnation; and extorting from him the anxious cry—what must I do to be saved—becomes a school-master to bring him unto Christ, that he may be justified by faith. Thus, through grace he renounces all dependance on his own works, and is resolved to be saved in God's way, or to perish at his feet.

Such were the feelings of Paul, now that he was baptized with the Holy Ghost, and made a

servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ.—Self was crucified.—With heart-felt sorrow he confessed his guilt, bore the most open testimony to the former enmity of his heart, and magnified that grace which brought him out of darkness into marvellous light. O happy change! the fruit of everlasting love.

Many striking instances are recorded of his self-abasing acknowledgments.

When standing on the stairs of the castle at Jerusalem, he said to the infuriated multitude, who were ready to tear him in pieces for his boldness in preaching Christ, as the King and Redeemer of Israel: "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high-priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders, from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring them which were there, bound to Jerusalem for to be punished."

When pleading his cause before King Agrippa, he declared with his usual sincerity: "I thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which things I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them; and I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them, even unto strange cities."

To the Galatian converts, he told the same

humiliating history: "Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure, I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it."

In his Epistle to the Christians at Corinth, he thus abases himself: "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God."

Enumerating to the believers at Philippi his Pharisaical merits, of which he was once so proud, he ranks as one of their number, "his zeal in persecuting the Church."

To the Ephesians, in a strain of sweet humility, he thus extols the grace which was so richly manifested in his conversion: "I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ."

How beautiful is true humility; it is the very image of Jesus. This heavenly grace gives such a sweetness to him who possesses it, that even the world attempts to imitate so lovely an attainment. The essential difference between Christian and counterfeit humility is soon discovered, by the patient endurance of the one, and the irascible nature of the other.

The haughty Saul, when he became a Christian, was humbled by every view of himself; but his humility was blended with gratitude, as is beautifully instanced in his Epistle to Timothy: "I

thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

After this exhibition of free unmerited mercy, no poor sinner need despair. To the heavy laden soul crying out for help, the converted Saul gives the cheering intelligence; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

How blessed is the assurance, that with the Lord there is mercy, that with him there is plenteous redemption. Delightful truth! He is good and ready to forgive, full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Happy then, is the man who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; for the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. What can exceed the richness of this divine promise, made to every humble believer in Jesus: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him, I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me,

and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him; with long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

As Paul, like a ravenous wolf, once devoured the sheep of Christ, so he himself, when made one of the Saviour's flock, became the object of bitter persecution. How true it is, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Even natural affection cannot restrain the violence of this deep-seated enmity against Christ and his people; for, "the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death."

With what faithfulness did Jesus forewarn his disciples, that through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom. But, did he leave them comfortless? Oh! how gracious are his parting words: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

"After that many days were fulfilled," the sacred historian informs us, "the Jews at Damascus took counsel to kill Saul." They watched the gates of the city day and night, so intent were they upon accomplishing their purpose. But their laying await being known of Saul, the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket, by which means he escaped out of their hands.

How secure is the believer in Jesus. As the

mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

Jesus guarded the life of his servant, to whom he had appointed a great and glorious work. He could therefore say to King Agrippa: "Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day." Blessed are they, who are actively engaged in the Lord's service; they may have many trials by the way, but He, who for their sakes endured the cross, despising the shame, will uphold them by his grace, and at length give them a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

We might naturally expect, that a powerful opposition would be excited against a man, whose conversion to the faith of Christ afforded such an overpowering evidence to the truth of Christianity, and whose holy conversation in Christ condemned the worldliness of the Priests and Pharisees.

The more St. Paul, by his life and doctrine, demonstrated the power and excellency of the Gospel, the more inveterate was the enmity manifested against him.—The minds of the Jews, as a nation, were judicially blinded. They knew not the day of their visitation. The Lord would have gathered them, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they would not. Their language towards Jesus was: "We will not have this man to reign over us."—And to his faithful servant: "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."—No arguments could convince them, no reasoning could persuade them, no miracles, wrought before their eyes,

could remove the stubbornness of their unbelief. Nothing, no nothing but the Almighty Power of the Spirit of God could bring them, as humble penitents, to the foot of the cross, make them to rejoice in the atonement of Jesus, and cause them to glorify God, by an entire submission to his will.

"Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart, nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away." When that reviving period shall arrive, a new impulse will be given to the Christian Church; and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

In reading the history of the infant Church, we might naturally expect that the disciples, on hearing of the conversion of Saul, would instantly hail it, as a glorious triumph of Christianity. But how faithfully does the sacred historian describe the feelings of the primitive Christians, who, knowing that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, the more effectually to deceive and to destroy, dreaded lest they should be betrayed under the mask of friendship.

"When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples, but they were all *afraid* of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them, how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

What could be more natural, than that Saul,

having tasted the grace of Jesus, should be anxious to join himself to his beloved people.

The Apostle mentions this visit to Jerusalem, in his Epistle to the Galatians: "When it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Afterwards I came into the region of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ. But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in time past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed, and they glorified God in me."

When Saul first introduced himself to the church of Jerusalem, in the new character of an Apostle, we cannot be surprised at the tardy reception he met with, as the disciples would well remember the caution given to them by their divine Master—"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in *sheep's clothing*, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

How exactly does this accord with our own experience. Any sudden change of character generally excites a degree of suspicion in our minds, and makes us cautious, lest by coming, too hastily, to a favourable decision, we should become the

dupes of artful deception; and more especially, if an avowed enemy, suddenly professes himself to be our friend.

But, if there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, is there no feeling of delight in the hearts of believers, when sinners, and especially persecutors, are converted to the faith of Christ? Assuredly there is,—and such holy joy was experienced by the saints at Jerusalem, when Barnabas had dissipated their fears, by bearing witness to the grace of Jesus manifested towards this bloody persecutor. The Apostles admitted Paul to the fellowship of the saints; they rejoiced over him; he was with them coming in, and going out, of Jerusalem; and in their Epistle to the Gentile converts on the subject of circumcision, they style him and Barnabas; "Beloved,—chosen men, who had hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus."—Thus they bore testimony to the truth of his conversion; and they glorified God in him.

During his stay at Jerusalem, the zealous Paul was actively engaged in the work to which Jesus had appointed him.—He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians; but so violent was their enmity to the truth, that they went about to slay him; which, when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

There is one feature of peculiar prominence in the character of the Apostle, which must strike every attentive observer—*the natural energy of his mind.*

He pursued no half measures, he entered into no cold calculations; what he did, he did with all his heart. This he intimated, when pleading before King Agrippa: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;"—and he fully acted upon that conviction.

Being dark in his views of prophetic truth respecting the Messiah, he stumbled at that Stone which God had laid in Zion. Jesus was to him a rock of offence. Hence all his energies were called into action to suppress the growing Church of Christ, and to silence those who proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. But, when enlightened by the Holy Ghost to see the glory of Emmanuel, and, to behold in the virgin's Son, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: a total change took place within him. His native energies were then directed into a new channel. Being brought under the influence of holy love, his ardour, though unquenchable, was tempered by mildness.

With incessant toil he laboured to promote the cause of his beloved Saviour, esteeming no sacrifice too great to advance his kingdom. Forbearance and charity shed their sweetness over his character, while decision and courage proved the firmness of his faith. He was truly a burning

and a shining light;—a city set on a hill, which could not be hid.

The sacred historian records several instances of his boldness in declaring the truth of the Gospel.

At JERUSALEM, as we have already seen, he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians.

At ANTIOCH, Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

At ICONIUM they abode long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

At EPHESUS, Paul went into the Synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Lukewarmness and faint-heartedness are traitors in the camp of Israel, and do more to weaken the cause of truth than the fiercest opposition from its determined enemies.

Faith and love, patience and prayer, are mighty weapons in the hand of the Spirit. The weakest saint, when exercising these graces, shall come off more than conqueror over the powers of darkness.

The reason why so many shrink from suffering for Christ's sake, arises from the coldness of

their love. Their faith, being weak, cannot bear them up against that stream of persecution which so powerfully sets in against them. Through fear, they yield to the attacks of the enemy, and thus bring distress into their consciences, as well as discredit on the Gospel. The realities of Eternity seem to be forgotten; or, at least, but faintly impressed upon their minds. Looking more at present inconveniences connected with a bold attachment to Christ, than at the glories to be revealed, they flag in their Christian course, and would for ever perish, if not restored through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The undaunted Apostle was a stranger to that fear of man which bringeth a snare, and causes multitudes to shrink from the cross. St. Paul being convinced of the truth of Christianity, through the immediate teaching of his divine Saviour, and the inward witness of the Spirit, feared not the face of man, nor the fury of the oppressor. Whether in Jerusalem, amidst the bigoted Jews, or at Athens, among the philosophers of the age, he gloried in the cross of Christ; and drew all his peace and joy from a believing reliance on the power and grace of Jesus.

The poison of popularity, the prospect of some temporal advantage, a false shame, the love of ease, a dread of suffering, in a word, *the love of the world*, concentrating all these evils within itself, causes many a minister of the Gospel to betray his trust, and many a promising professor to droop and wither.

Faith in the atonement of Christ, is the

victory that overcometh the world. This divine principle made the faithful Apostle always to triumph in Christ.

Through the power of the cross, the world had lost its charms, and death its terrors. A heavenly light filled his mind, and an all constraining love his heart. He saw in Jesus, all that was precious, and he found in him all that he needed; hence he disregarded the frowns of men, and was willing to bear shame and reproach for Jesus' sake.

Being filled with the Spirit, he preached the word of life with the fullest confidence of success; well knowing, that through the combined power of Truth and Love, the stoutest hearts would be humbled, the hardest softened, and the most polluted rendered pure.

When Jesus was seated at the right-hand of the Father, in fufilment of his promise, he graciously poured out the Holy Ghost on his Apostles. With this divine unction, they went forth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation; and nothing could exceed the fortitude which they displayed. Their courage astonished the Jewish Rulers; of whom it is recorded, that, "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

To encourage his disciples before his departure, Jesus said: "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."—Being now as sheep in the midst of wolves, they needed strength and

protection.—With a believing reliance on this promise, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord: "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.—Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

It may well be said, that the prayer of faith moves the hand that moves the world.

Happy, thrice happy would it be for the Christian Church, if all her ministers were men of a kindred spirit, who, in the fulness of their faith and love, could sacrifice reputation, ease, wealth, yea, even life itself, for the Gospel's sake.—But alas! the spirit of the world has made sad inroads into the visible Church of Christ; for many are slumbering on the lap of ease, who should be watchmen on the walls, and champions in the camp, of Zion.

Still, there are many blessed witnesses, who are valiant for the Truth, whose light shines in the midst of darkness, and whose labours are rendered effectual in spreading the knowledge of Christ. May their numbers be abundantly in-

creased, till Zion shall become a praise in the earth.

To every such faithful labourer, St. Paul gives this most important charge: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

How rousing was the Divine commission given by Jehovah to his servant Jeremiah: "Gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak to them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

With equal force is the command to Ezekiel: "Son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious."

The great Apostle of the Gentiles entered fully into the spirit of these Divine charges.

He was no timid, no time-serving shepherd of the flock. His character is beautifully described

by Malachi, under the general description of faithful pastors: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked in peace and equity, and did turn many away from their iniquity. For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."

May all the friends of Christ be stirred up to fervent prayer at this eventful period, that a spirit of revival may be poured out on all our Churches, lest the Lord, in righteous judgment, should fulfil on us, his threatening to the church at Ephesus: "Remember from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee *quickly*, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

"In pity to a dying world,
Almighty Father, send thy grace;
And let thy banner be unfurl'd,
And faith's slow triumph speed its pace.

"What millions of immortal souls,
Still live unmindful of thy sway!
And as death's fearful torrent rolls,
Hundreds are daily swept away.

"O Lord, must creatures be undone,
Who from thy hand receive their breath?
Shall they be lost, for whom thy Son,
Came down to suffer shame and death?

"Let sovereign mercy interpose,
To rescue sinners from their doom:

And send thy word to heal their woes,
And light their passage to the tomb.

"O spread thy truth through ev'ry clime,
Teach stubborn souls to weep and pray;
Let this be the accepted time,
And this, salvation's glorious day."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PERSECUTIONS WHICH ST. PAUL ENDURED FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL.

WHEN Daniel stood before Nebuchadnezzar to explain his dream, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, however galling it might be to the ambition of this haughty conqueror. He told him of the fleeting nature of his own dominion; that empire would succeed empire, till the period of the fourth monarchy should arrive, when the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed; that it would break in pieces and consume all the former kingdoms, and that it should stand for ever.

This kingdom was represented to Nebuchadnezzar by a stone cut out without hands, to signify, that it would be established in the earth by an Almighty Power, and not through human skill. While other empires were to pass away, this stone was to increase, till it should become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.

In another vision, Daniel saw one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven; he came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him

near before him; and there was given to him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all the people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Jesus, the Prince of peace, the Lord of glory, is this Son of Man, this King of Zion. All who truly believe in him, are the subjects of this spiritual kingdom; for it was revealed to Daniel, that "the saints of the Most High should take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

In fulfilment of this glorious prophecy, Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world." As his kingdom was to be erected upon the ruins of idolatry, and whatsoever exalteth itself against the glory of God, the world would naturally oppose its establishment and enlargement. And so it was revealed to Daniel. He saw a persecuting power in his emblematical vision, which should make war with the saints, and prevail against them, until the Ancient of days should come, and judgment be given to the saints of the Most High; and the time arrive, that the saints should possess the kingdom.

From this prophecy, in connexion with those contained in the Revelation of St. John, we are made acquainted with two important facts:—the one is, that the Kingdom of Christ shall finally prevail, and become an universal Dominion, blessing the earth with peace and righteousness; the other, that the true Church of Christ will have

to contend with the powers of darkness and to endure persecution from an ungodly world, until the period shall arrive when Christ will tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and break his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel.

With these prophetic declarations before us, we need not be surprised at the multiplied trials of St. Paul, and those of true Christians in every age, who devote their lives to the service of Christ, and to the destruction of Satan's kingdom. But it will not be always so. The period of the Church's glory is rapidly advancing. The Lord will hasten it in his time.

To trace the various trials which the Apostle endured; his many privations, and never-ceasing cares, will, no doubt, be interesting as well as profitable. The view of his sufferings should shame us out of our supineness. Can we remain indifferent to the interests of Christ's kingdom, and the eternal happiness of mankind, when he underwent so much for the same Jesus, whom we profess to worship; and out of love to such perishing sinners, as now surround us; and who are continually passing into eternity, regardless of the torments which await them?

It is painful to think, how little our hearts are affected by the wickedness which overspreads the earth. There is an obtuseness on this subject, which indicates great want of spiritual feeling. We are not sufficiently alive to the evil of sin, even in our best moments; but could we see, as God

seeth, we should be overwhelmed by the view of human depravity.

Whilst Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Law, written with the finger of God on two tables of stone, the people were corrupting themselves, by making a golden calf and dancing round it with idolatrous worship. The Almighty acquainted Moses with this act of rebellion, and threatened to destroy them instantly. Anxious for the honour of God and the preservation of Israel, he interceded in their behalf, and prevailed.

But no sooner did Moses descend from the mountain, and become himself *a witness* to their abominations, than his anger waxed hot against Aaron and the congregation. He cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the Mount; he ground the golden calf to powder; and in the name of the Lord God of Israel he commanded the sons of Levi to slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

How far beyond our conception is the forbearance of God, who beholds, at one glance, all the evil which is perpetrated, yea all the evil which is *devised*, by all the millions of human beings throughout their successive generations!

Truly his mercy his infinite. He is God and not man, therefore we sons of men are not consumed. But the Lord is also a God of judgment, who will by no means clear the guilty; for he hath declared by his prophet, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God."

We live in a day of rebuke and blasphemy; in a day when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth; a day in which the enemies of Christ are awake and active. Infidelity is unfurling its standard, and spreading its poison. Satan is mustering his forces against the saints of the Most High.

If ever the people of God were called upon by the voice of Providence to be up and doing, it is now. This is not the time to slumber, when the foe is in the breach; it is not the season for rest, when the Lord calls his soldiers to the spiritual combat. The weapons of our warfare, though despised by the world, are mighty, through God, to destroy the empire of Satan and to establish the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

O that the Spirit of love may descend upon us from on high. Then will ministers and people, like the early Christians, labour for the conversion of sinners; cultivate personal religion; sit loosely to the world; and gladly suffer the loss of all things for Jesus' sake.

What the great Apostle of the Gentiles cheerfully endured out of love to the souls of men, and for the sake of his Redeemer, would appal the stoutest heart if destitute of Gospel principles. Nothing but Divine Love, shed abroad in the heart, could have produced such astonishing acts of patience and self-denial; such cheerfulness in suffering; such preparedness for death.

When writing to the Corinthians, he says: "I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death, for we are made

a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

Where is the worldling who would endure such accumulated sufferings and contempt, for any promises of good beyond the grave? Worldly men will bear many privations, connected with some earthly advantage, which they hope ere long to enjoy: it is the true Christian only, who can suffer for eternal glory. Much consolation was mixed with the Apostle's tribulations; he could therefore say: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

Following the steps of his Divine Master, who endured the cross, despising the shame, he told the Corinthians: "In all things we approve ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings. By honour and dishonour; by evil report, and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying and behold we live; as chastened and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

As if this weight of suffering were insufficient to manifest the strength of his faith and patience, there were teachers in the church of Corinth, who, through envy, sought to undermine his usefulness, by insinuating doubts respecting the validity of his claim to the office of an Apostle.

This aspersion excited a holy indignation in the breast of Paul; for nothing could be more abhorrent to a heart hating dissimulation, than such a false assumption of character.

With peculiar energy, he thus writes to the Corinthian Church: "Am I not an Apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? If I be not an Apostle unto others, doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord." "I am become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, *though I be nothing.*"

What a striking instance is this, of self-abasement. While he was compelled to magnify his apostolic office, he beautifully invests it with the robe of humility. Then he adds: "Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you, in patience, in signs, in wonders, and mighty deeds."

Referring to his traducers, he says: "Are they ministers of Christ (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings

was meek and lowly in heart; and who hath commanded us to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and follow him.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Do we then study the character of our blessed Lord as revealed in the Gospel; and pray without ceasing, that our souls may be transformed into his holy image? The more we drink into the spirit of Jesus, the more we shall experience peace and rest in our souls.

Suffering is the lot of all, but the afflictions of the righteous are sanctified afflictions; they conduce to their growth in grace, and mark out the way to the heavenly kingdom.

St. Paul knew this well; for Jesus had told him, what great things he must suffer for his name's sake. In the midst of the furnace, his Saviour stood near him, giving him the blessed assurance that if he suffered with him, he should also reign with him. Hence, soaring on the wings of faith and love above this darkened scene, he could exclaim with holy triumph: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When Jesus drew near to the time of his crucifixion, how sweetly did he comfort his little flock: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Peace is the legacy which Jesus left to his Church; a precious gift, more valuable than the wealth of Indies. It is the fruit of his Spirit, the portion of his saints, whose peace, flowing like a river, widens as it approaches the ocean of eternity.

In the midst of trouble, they are kept in perfect peace, because their minds are stayed on Him; resting with unshaken faith upon his atonement, righteousness, and intercession, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Are they called to endure affliction? They can praise their Saviour in the fires. The flame which loosens the earthly cord, like a fiery chariot, bears their unfettered spirits to the realms of bliss. None are exempt from trials; all must prepare to meet them; come they will, in one shape or other. There are trials, peculiar to a state of poverty, and to a state of wealth. Some have family burdens, with the blessing of health; others are free from domestic cares, but are oppressed with sickness; some enjoy the blessedness of personal piety, while their immediate relatives are far from God; others are labouring to benefit their fellow sinners, but meet with little else than ingratitude and opposition. The poor man is tempted to think hardly of God; the rich man to forget him. Even the believer finds a constant need for watchfulness and prayer, by reason of the sin which dwelleth in him.

Thus each one has to bear his own burden;

and oh! how often does our merciful God, "stay his rough wind, in the day of his East wind," that his people may be able to carry their cross with comparative ease, through the sustaining power of his Holy Spirit, till they all meet around his throne, wearing the crown of glory, and ascribing all their salvation to Him who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them Kings and Priests unto God.

"He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode;
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there, at night, shall rest his head.

"Just as a hen protects her brood
From birds of prey that seek their blood,
Under her feathers: so the Lord
Makes his own arm his people's guard.

"But if the fire, or plague, or sword,
Receive commission from the Lord
To strike his saints among the rest,
Their very pains, and deaths are blest.

"The sword, the pestilence, or fire
Shall but fulfil their best desire,
From sins and sorrows set them free,
And bring thy children, Lord, to thee."

CHAPTER V.

A SHORT HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE APOSTLE'S TRIALS.

LET us now trace the Apostle's journey of mercy, as recorded by his fellow-labourer and historian St. Luke.

While we travel with him from city to city we shall find that everywhere bonds and afflictions awaited him.

He was a flame, kept alive in the midst of raging waters. By the preserving care of his Saviour, he was *immortal*, till his work was done.

At JERUSALEM, the theatre of his bloody persecutions, he no sooner began to preach salvation through the cross of Christ, than the unbelieving Jews went about to kill him.

At ANTIOCH, the people flocked in such numbers to hear the Gospel, that the Jews, filled with envy, spake against those things which were spoken of Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, till they succeeded in raising a persecution against him, and in expelling him out of their coast. But he shook off the dust of his feet against them, and came unto Iconium, being filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

At Iconium, the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against Paul and Barnabas, so that an assault was made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their Rulers, to use them despitefully, and stone them.

At Lystra, certain Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, they drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead; but whilst the disciples stood round about him, he was miraculously restored.

At this place the Apostle gave a striking proof of the purity of his principles. Having performed a miracle upon a cripple who had never walked, being lame from his birth, the astonished multitude cried out: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." It was with much difficulty that Paul restrained them from doing sacrifice unto him, saying: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God."

How different was the spirit and end of Herod, who drank in the poison of popular adulation. Being arrayed in royal apparel, and seated upon his throne, he made an oration unto the people. They gave a shout, saying "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, *because he gave not God the glory;* and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

At Philippi, when travelling with Silas, the

multitude rose up together against them. The magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them; and when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely, who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Here, the Almighty appeared in behalf of his suffering servants, for, while they were singing praises to God during the hour of midnight, suddenly there was a great earthquake; so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

Through the wonder-working power of grace, the jailor was made to cry for mercy, to believe in Jesus, to show kindness to the Apostle; and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

At Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with the Jews three Sabbath days out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that Jesus whom he preached unto them is Christ. And some believed and consorted with him and Silas. But, the Jews who believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar.

At Berea, Paul had no rest, for when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached by him at this place, they came hither and stirred up the people. Yet his visit was not without some fruit; for the Jews at

Berea, were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. And the happy consequence was, that many of them believed: also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

At Athens, he had to endure the strife of tongues. In the Synagogue he disputed with the Jews, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks encountered him; while others, mocking said: "What will this babbler say? Thou bringest strange things to our ears." The opposition which St. Paul met with from these philosophers, most strikingly shows the holy and humbling nature of the Gospel.

The Epicureans derided him, because the pure and self-denying precepts of Christ, condemned and controlled their loose and exorbitant course of life. The Stoicks assailed him, because the meek and lowly spirit of the Gospel was directly opposed to their immoderate pride and love of praise.

All, both philosophers and plebeans, ridiculed him, because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection, and exposed, by arguments drawn from Creation and Providence, the folly of idolatry, and their gross superstition in worshipping an unknown God.

At Corinth, when Gallio was deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judg-

ment seat. But here, the Apostle received strength and consolation from on high. The Lord spake to him in the night by a vision: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city."

At Ephesus, a violent tumult was raised by Demetrius, who made silver shrines for Diana. The whole city was full of confusion, and so great was the danger that, when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

At Miletus, St. Paul expressed his feelings to the elders of the church of Ephesus with inimitable tenderness. "Now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befal me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying: that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know, that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more!"

At Cæsarea the Apostle manifested a noble firmness. A certain prophet from Judæa, named Agabas, took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said: "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." When the disciples

heard this, they besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But was such a man as he, to be intimidated through fear of suffering? Could he, who gloried in tribulation for Christ's sake, he induced to shrink from the cross? Paul answered: "What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And when he could not be persuaded, they ceased, saying:—the Will of the Lord be done!

At JERUSALEM, the Apostle did indeed experience the full accomplishment of the predictions of Agabus. All the city was moved; and when the people ran together, they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple, and went about to kill him. The chief captain also commanded him to be bound with two chains. But Jesus did not forsake his faithful servant. In a vision of the night, the Lord stood by him, and said: "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

With such divine assurances of support, with such favoured manifestations of his Savour's love, he might well say to Agrippa, in his eloquent defence, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Having appealed to Cæsar,—Festus said to Paul:—"Unto Cæsar, shalt thou go." All this was over-ruled, to lead this faithful ambassador of Christ to Rome, that there also he might testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

With such unceasing trials the Apostle might well say to the Corinthians: "If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But his hope was founded on the Rock of Ages; his life was hid with Christ in God; therefore he was safe and happy.

Being put into a ship at Adramyttium, this faithful minister of Christ proceeded on his voyage to Rome. He whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, was pleased to raise a storm which should manifest his power, promote the spread of his Truth, and procure respect for his suffering servant.

When neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest threatened their destruction, all hope that the crew would be saved was taken away.

Any religion will stand in a calm.—In a storm, in the moment of imminent danger, the true Christian alone exhibits the strength of his principles. When the worldling is filled with dismay, he is full of comfort, yea exceeding joyful in all his tribulation. Amidst the raging elements, the Apostle stood as the messenger of mercy. "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now, I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me, this night, the Angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying: Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar; and lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore,

Sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Happy Paul! to be thus honoured of God, and blessed with his presence! Cæsar, surrounded with all the splendours of an imperial palace, was poor indeed, when compared with this despised prisoner of Jesus Christ.

We may here learn to form a just estimate of human happiness. It does not consist in the abundance of wealth, the dignity of power, or the fascinations of pleasure; but, in the enjoyment of the divine favour, and in an uniform loving obedience to the divine will.

Can we, like the holy Apostle, in filial confidence declare: "Whose I am, and whom I serve?" To do this is happiness upon earth; to feel this, is the commencement of heavenly felicity. If our hearts assure us that the Lord is our portion, we are truly rich, under every outward privation. Faith is the key which unlocks the store-house of divine bounty. Possessing this gift of grace, the believer can hope against hope, and repose upon the promises under every discouragement. When all is dark around him, and dangers threaten his destruction, he can even then rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.

How sweetly does David sing: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;—therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

Faith is a triumphant principle. It supported the royal Psalmist under all his varied trials, and upheld the undaunted Paul amidst the storms which everywhere assailed him.

To the affrighted crew, the Apostle manifested its supporting influence, when he declared: "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

This is faith in its native simplicity. It is taking God at his word. It is trusting in a naked promise, believing that God will do as he hath said. It is confidence in the faithfulness, power, and love of Christ. It is reliance upon the truth of Him who cannot lie, whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure. Such faith, as it honours God, so it brings peace and purity into the soul.

Being cast upon the Island of Melita, the Apostle would no doubt preach among its inhabitants the unsearchable riches of Christ. Publius, the chief man of the Island, lodged him three days courteously; to whom he rendered a signal benefit through the power of Jesus, by the restoration of his father to health.

The common people also were directed to attend unto the word of salvation, by his miraculous escape from death; for when a viper fastened itself upon his hand, he shook it off, without receiving any harm. Thus they saw in Paul the prisoner, a dignity far surpassing an ordinary character; and they honoured him with many honours.

At length the Apostle came to Rome. When

the brethren heard of his arrival in Italy, they came to meet him, as far as Appii Forum, whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

After he had been three days at Rome, he called the chief of the Jews together, to whom he made known the reasons for his thus appearing as a prisoner amongst them; and when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodgings, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening; and some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. Through the preserving care of his Almighty Saviour, St. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house? and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching them those things which concern the Lord Jesus, no man forbidding him. The same God who quenched the violence of the burning fiery furnace, and shut the lions' mouths; restrained the power of Nero, and the fury of the Jews.

How divine was that principle which enabled the Apostle to undergo such a series of cruel mockings and scourgings. Blessed be God! the same faith is now imparted to every earnest seeker after Christ. We all need it, and we may all obtain it. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money.—Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely. Look unto me, all ye ends of the

earth, and be ye saved. Incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your soul shall live."

Such is the freeness of redeeming love. The poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind are invited, while the proud, who make light of these blessings, are sent empty away.

With these invitations of mercy, the unwearied Apostle went forth into the highways and hedges, seeking out the lost sinners of mankind, and compelling them, through the force of Truth and Love, to come to the Gospel feast.

As a loving heart makes willing feet, so he considered no distance too great, no road too rough, if only he could be the means of saving sinners from the wrath to come.

He delighted in his work;—his whole heart was engaged in it, and his whole life was devoted to it. But, the time now drew near, when this servant of Christ was to seal the Truth with his blood, and to receive the crown of martyrdom; a crown, in his estimation, infinitely surpassing in glory, all the diadems of the world.

From Rome, in what appears to be his last Epistle, St. Paul feelingly and triumphantly writes to his beloved Timothy:

"Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God. I am appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles, for the which cause I suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have be-

lieved, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

"Remember, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound; therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

"Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

"All they which are in Asia be turned away from me. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. When he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God, that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,

and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen."

How sweet, how serene, how full of hope are his parting, his almost dying words: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Thus sank to rest this bright luminary of the Christian Church; but he only sank beneath the earthly horizon, to rise, with resplendent glory, in the morning of the resurrection.

Like his Divine Master, he was forsaken by his friends in the bitter hour of persecution; and like him, he prayed that it might not be laid to their charge.

Thus did Stephen, and so will all who possess the spirit of Jesus, and who feel the influence of that charity, which covereth, as with a mantle, a multitude of sins.

As he felt the blessedness of the promise: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" so he could boldly say: "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

He was not afraid to die, for he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ. His heart was in heaven, because his treasure was there. When therefore the appointed hour arrived, which was to convey his waiting spirit into the presence of his God, he cared not by what instrument this blessed-

CHAPTER VI.

ON CONVERSION. ST. PAUL'S DELIGHT IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS TO WHOM HE WROTE HIS EPISTLES. HIS THANKFULNESS FOR SUCCESS IN HIS MINISTRY.

WE have beheld a glorious display of Almighty power in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who, from a fiery bigot was made a zealous disciple of Jesus Christ.

In the great work of conversion, the Almighty acts upon us as rational creatures.

When man fell from his original state of innocence, and lost the image of his Maker, he did not lose those powers of his soul which distinguished him from the brute creation. Being endued with understanding, will, affections, memory, and conscience, he still remained a free agent, a responsible being, subject to moral obligations. But, he became a *sinner*, and as such, he was obnoxious to infinite justice, lay under the curse of a broken law, and having lost both righteousness and strength, was utterly unable to regain either holiness or happiness.

In this state of spiritual death, despair would

have made Adam its wretched victim, had not the Throne of Grace appeared, from whence, in sweetest sounds, mercy proclaimed salvation through the Virgin's Son.

What wonder must have seized the heavenly host, when Love, uprising from the bosom of the Eternal Father, in the person of the Everlasting Son, thus expressed his willingness to save our ruined race: "Lo I come: In the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Jesus, the promised Saviour, came into our world, and bled and died that guilty man might, through his death, be made an heir of glory. A way of escape is now opened for us. All who believe in Jesus shall be saved. All, who are found *in Him*, are accepted and blessed of the Father. But as the mercy of our God is great, so also is his justice. *Out of Christ*, we are hopeless and helpless. We fell in Adam. Through his fall we lost all spiritual strength. We cannot save ourselves.

No parental discipline, no human law, no system of education, no influence of friends, no moral suasion, no ministerial labour, no afflictive dispensation, nor any other earthly thing, can, *of itself*, turn a soul from darkness unto light,—from the power of Satan unto God.

All these may be, and often are, blessed *as means*, but the Holy Spirit is the sole efficient, free, and sovereign agent in the regeneration of the soul. God will, and must have all the glory of our salvation, through Jesus Christ. The proud

sinner must be humbled, and brought as a little child to the foot of the cross. Fallen man fancies himself to be something, when he is nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. But, "thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight saith the Lord."

Through the Gospel of his grace, the Almighty persuasively, yet powerfully addresses the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. He reveals to us our danger as apostate rebels; our madness in preferring sin to holiness—the road to hell, rather than the way to heaven. He unfolds to us the redeeming love of Christ, to melt our hearts, to captivate our affections, to move our wills to choose him as our only Saviour. And when His Divine Power thus accompanies the Word of Truth, great and glorious is the change produced. The darkened understanding is enlightened, the crooked will receives a new bias, the wayward affections are fixed upon Christ, and the wretched outcast is made a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus, when pouring his heavenly light into the benighted mind of Nicodemus, made him acquainted with this all-important truth: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." St. John, the beloved disciple, informs us, that, when Jesus came unto his own, his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

To the multitudes who followed him, because they did eat of the loaves, and were filled, Jesus said: "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

St. James, in perfect unison with his Divine Master, says: "Of his own will, begat he us, with the word of his truth."

And so does St. Peter: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, —but, with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

St. John attests the same divine truth: "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for

his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

St. Paul, taught by the same Holy Spirit, proclaims in all his Epistles, the doctrine of free grace, abounding to the chief of sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

When speaking of himself in his ministerial capacity, he says: "By the grace of God, I am what I am—and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, which is Jesus Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ—and stewards of the mysteries of God."

With feelings of gratitude, the Apostle ascribed all his ministerial usefulness, and personal holiness, to the grace of God, and to that unction from the Holy One, which is the earnest of future glory.

It is beautiful to see with what humility he seeks on all occasions to magnify the love of God, which shone so brightly in his conversion.

If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our hearts, like that of Paul, will overflow with thankfulness and praise.

With the same faithful pen, guided by the unerring Spirit of Truth, he shows to the various churches, the source of all their blessedness: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in tresspasses and sins; having forgiven you all trespasses. For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ye are all the

children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light. Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

O! that the pure Gospel of our salvation were sounded throughout the earth; then would the nations rejoice and be glad; then would this waste howling wilderness become the garden of the Lord.

Blessed is that minister, who, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, is able to say to his flock: "Brethren, be ye followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample."

An awful neglect, yea more, a marked dislike is often manifested to the doctrines of grace, under the specious but false pretence of vindicating the interests of morality.

Pride lurks at the bottom of such opposition, or at least a dangerous obscurity veils the minds of many, respecting the true nature of the Gospel of Christ.

These opposers may be amiable in their manners, benevolent in their dispositions, and correct in their conduct: yet, being dark in their views

respecting the *Gospel way* of salvation, they consider the zealous preacher of the cross as an enemy, rather than a friend to *practical* Christianity. They do not see that all practical godliness springs from a lively faith in a crucified Saviour, through whom the sinner is freely and fully justified, "*without the deeds of the law.*"

Were all our churches filled with such men as Paul the Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ, our island would become a Goshen, full of the light of Gospel Truth.

A day is fast approaching, when each must give account of himself to God. We are all stewards of the manifold gifts of grace. All have some talents committed to their trust, and for those talents all will be responsible unto God who gave them. When the command goes forth: "Give an account of thy stewardship," may we do it with joy, and not with grief. Dreadful in that day, will be the doom of slothful pastors, blind guides, negligent hearers, and wilful abusers of divine mercy.

Hath the Father so loved us, as not to withhold from us his Son, his only Son? Hath the Son so loved us, as to purchase our souls with his own blood? Hath the Eternal Spirit so loved us as to condescend to dwell in our polluted hearts? And shall none of these things move us?

This love of God in Christ was the delightful theme which inspired the tongue, warmed the heart, fired the zeal, and impelled the progress of the indefatigable Apostle into the darkest regions of the earth. He knew no happiness separate from that

of preaching Christ crucified, as the Saviour of sinners, the Justifier of the ungodly, the Purifier of the unclean.

When he saw the divine blessing accompanying his labours, in fulfilment of his Redeemer's promise, his heart overflowed with joy. He knew whom he had believed; he inwardly felt the consolations of the Gospel; he realized by faith the glory to be revealed; and was desirous that all around him should partake of the same felicity.

The Epistles which he wrote, afford abundant evidence of his unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus, and his fervent love to all the saints. As letters are directed to certain individuals, so the Epistles of St. Paul describe the persons to whom they were addressed.

The following directions are so plain, that no one can well mistake the character of the persons for whom they were intended.

"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints."

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints."

"To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus."

"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi."

"To all the saints and faithful brethren which are at Colosse."

"Unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

From these addresses, with which his several Epistles commence, it is evident, that the Apostle did not write to a set of carnal, ungodly, worldly, unbelieving men, who cared nothing for Christ, or for the salvation of their souls: but, to those who had been convinced of sin, converted to God, united by faith to Jesus Christ, in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt, and who, by their holy lives, were so many shining lights in the midst of a dark and polluted world.

Are these beautiful Letters, which contain such consolations and directions, addressed only "To the saints, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus?" Then let not the carnal professor of the Gospel, whose heart is glued to the world, for one moment think, that these glorious promises in Christ Jesus are *his*, merely because he has been sprinkled with water at the baptismal font, or because he bears a *Christian name*, and outwardly adheres to the visible Church of Christ.

While in a state of unregeneracy, all the denunciations of wrath contained in these Epistles are against him, for thus saith the Apostle: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." However much it may offend his pride, yet such a nominal Christian, destitute of the Spirit of Christ, while conforming to the ceremonials of religion, is on a level with the poor benighted heathen, yea, in a condition far more awful. For what says our blessed Lord himself, respecting the highly-favoured Jews of his day, whose privileges were not so great as those which we enjoy since his glorious ascension, and

the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost? "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. But, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Let each one then, with deep solicitude, ask himself this serious question: Do I bear the character, and manifest the spirit of those primitive believers, to whom St. Paul wrote with such paternal affection?

To ascertain this important point, still further inquire: Do I believe in Jesus with all my heart? Is my love to him supreme and fervent? Am I reposing all my hopes of glory upon his atonement, righteousness, and intercession? Do the fruits of the Spirit appear and abound within me? Am I delivered from the pollutions and vanities of the world? Is holiness the element in which I desire to live? Do I crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body?

If our hearts can give the faithful affirmative; if we can truly say, that we love Jesus, and long

to be for ever with him; and if our daily walk bears witness to the sincerity of this our profession: then we may read these beautiful Epistles, as if they were addressed to ourselves, and take all the promises of forgiveness, reconciliation, strength, and consolation which are contained in them to our personal comfort; and in the fulness of faith, and hope, and charity, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The praising Christian is the happy Christian. God wills the happiness of his people, and is Himself the source of their happiness.

The heart of St. Paul was peculiarly susceptible of grateful emotions. Divine grace shone forth with such a loveliness in all his actions, as renders the contemplation of his character and experience most interesting to the Christian mind.

Let us hear some of his sweet accents of praise, as expressed to the churches which he had been instrumental in forming, in the midst of idolatrous abominations.

To the Christians at Rome: "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world?"

To the Corinthians: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."

To the Philippians: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now."

To the Colossians: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, since we

heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints."

To the Thessalonians: "We give thanks to God always for you all, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

Having himself tasted the goodness of the Lord, the Apostle was delighted when he saw other poor sinners led by the Spirit, to the same fountain of grace and mercy.

What a happy feeling is holy gratitude, when it expands itself toward that Saviour whose bounty is ever affording fresh occasion for its rapturous emotion.

Those cold hearted Christians lose much spiritual enjoyment, who would exclude the exercise of the affections from their system of religion.

As some persons, through the corruption of their hearts, "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," and others, let their passions run mad into the wilds of enthusiasm; so many, to avoid these evils, *as they think*, oppose the glorious freeness of Gospel grace, and the lively exercise of *sanctified* affections. But, unless the affections of the heart be engaged, little progress will be made in the divine life, by the mere knowledge of the

head. With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness; Christ dwells *in the heart* by faith.

True faith is not a cold assent of the understanding; it is a divine grace wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which exercises the highest powers, and the best affections of the soul. It unites the believer to Christ, works by love, and binds all the members of his mystical body together, by the indissoluble bond of charity.

Are we in possession of this Gospel grace? If not, are we seeking after it, with an earnestness which will ensure the blessing? Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it. Jesus, who bids us ask, will never fail to bestow the gift which his Spirit stirs us up to seek.

How encouraging are the words of David: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the poor; thou preparest their heart, and thine ear hearkeneth thereto."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRAYERS OF ST. PAUL FOR THE CHRISTIAN CONVERTS. HIS LABOUR TO PROMOTE THE STABILITY OF BELIEVERS. THE LOVE OF CHRIST HIS GOVERNING PRINCIPLE. HIS BENEVOLENT EXERTIONS FOR THE POOR SAINTS IN JUDÆA.

THE heart of St. Paul glowed with holy love, and was ever sending forth its fervent aspirations to a throne of grace, in behalf of the objects of his affection.

He knew the value of prayer. To thanksgivings for the spiritual blessings imparted to the Gentile Christians, he added earnest supplications, that they might grow in grace and hold fast the beginning of their confidence, firm unto the end.

What a beautiful example of ministerial faithfulness is thus afforded by this tender-hearted shepherd, to all succeeding pastors in the Christian Church. How sublime and energetic, how full of life and unction, are the prayers which he poured out in behalf of those newly converted believers, to whom he wrote his Epistles.

He has left us a most invaluable specimen of that fervent prayer which availeth much. May

all who read these holy breathings of the Apostle, experience the fulness of the blessings which he so ardently implored for all the churches.

Being filled with the spirit of grace and supplication, he thus expressed the inward feelings of his heart: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right-hand in the heavenly places.

"For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excel-

lent, that ye may be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

"I do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: faithful is he that called you, who also will do it.

"Wherefore also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the pleasure of his goodness, and the

work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

"The Lord of peace himself, give you peace always by all means.

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

"Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him

be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen."

The glorious subject of these petitions cannot be too much studied; the blessings which they contain, cannot be too earnestly implored.

These prayers of the Apostle lead us, as it were, into the inner chamber of his heart. We see what were his inmost desires for the spiritual welfare of his children in the faith. Here, nothing is cold or formal; all is fervent, energetic, affectionate. *That* which the world derides, and the formalist censures, is the very thing he so ardently supplicated for the churches of Christ: even the RELIGION OF THE HEART, manifesting itself by a supreme delight in Jesus, by a holy renunciation of fleshly lusts, and by an uniform obedience to the Will of God.

The Apostle not only rejoiced over those who were made the subjects of divine grace, and prayed for their continuance in well-doing, but he also laboured with incessant toil for their establishment in the faith.

This truly apostolic spirit is beautifully displayed in his address to the elders of Ephesus: "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you,

but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from *house to house*, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you *all the counsel of God.* Therefore, watch, and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

Not having been at Rome when he wrote his Epistle to the Christians of that city, he expressed his desire with peculiar delicacy, that he might be permitted to visit them, for their furtherance in the faith of the Gospel.

"God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request, if by any means, now at length I might have a prosperous journey, by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me."

As the heart of St. Paul was filled with love and gentleness, so he was equally undaunted in the hour of danger. His Christian heroism was strikingly displayed at Lystra.

Having, as we have seen, been stoned by the

people, he miraculously rose up, and *came into the city;* and the next day, he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they *returned to Lystra* and to Iconium and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. Afterwards he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. Then he came once more to Derbe and Lystra; so the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

The Apostle, regardless of his personal safety, watched over the interests of the infant churches. When persecution was spreading its fires on every side, he trembled for the souls of his spiritual children, lest Satan should get an advantage over them; for he was not ignorant of his devices. He had a deep insight into the human heart, being well acquainted with his own. And knowing that, "as in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man," he was enabled to speak a word in season, and to give such cautions, as were needful to guard believers against those snares which were laid for their feet.

His love, for the souls of men, led him to endure the greatest privations for their salvation and growth in grace. Impelled by this principle, he traversed various regions, that he might plant churches, and water those which were already planted.

No force of opposition could deter him from

the performance of this duty, nor cause him to desert his beloved converts in the hour of danger. When he could not see them, through providential hindrances, he wrote invaluable Epistles to confirm and strengthen them; and when enabled to travel, we find how fearlessly he revisited those places which were noted by his trials; being willing rather to risk the loss of life, than that one soul should perish through his neglect or from fear of suffering.

In all this, the Apostle sought not his own glory, but the glory of God; not his own interest, but the interest of perishing sinners. Hence he could say: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." With the angels of God, he could rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth; and praise the Lord, for every brand which was plucked out of the fire. Having been caught up into paradise, his soul was full of heavenly love, and all his prayer, and desire, and labour was, that heaven might be let down into the hearts of men, through a believing reception of Jesus Christ.

What a model is here presented to Christian teachers in every age. There was nothing lukewarm, nothing timid, nothing selfish, in the character of this preacher of righteousness.—The love of Christ was the governing principle of his actions; to promote the glory of Christ was the constant desire of his heart. He could truly say: "To me to live is Christ."—A heavenly light irradiated his mind. He saw, by faith, the realities of eternity, and his bowels yearned over dying sinners. Beholding them suspended by the thread

of life over the gulph of hell, in danger every moment of dropping into its everlasting fire, he laboured to rescue them from ruin. With unwearied solicitude, he directed them to Jesus, the only Saviour and Friend of sinners, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and who can and will save to the uttermost, all that came unto God by him.

Thus he felt for the unconverted Jews when writing to the Church at Rome: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

He also expressed his great solicitude for their salvation: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved: for I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." In them, he saw the image of his former self. He could therefore pity them, and pray for them, and labour to do them good. But he trembled for their state of unbelief. With a prophetic eye, he foresaw the miseries which were coming upon them as a people, who, to use his own words, "both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill

up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

The present degraded state of the Jews is an awful comment upon these words; while their existence as a people, affords an undeniable and perpetual evidence to the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations." "Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord; for I am with thee: for I will make a full end of all nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee." "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O House of Judah and House of Israel, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing."

What uninspired men could have uttered these words with the certainty of their fulfilment? It is most evident, therefore, that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Jews have been scattered and peeled; they are to this day, wanderers, and a by-word among the nations. Those kingdoms which once oppressed them are now no more; while *they* still preserve their national character, customs, and religion, though dispersed throughout the earth, without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. What but Almighty Power could have

effected, and what but Infinite Omniscience could have foreseen, EVENTS, which ought to shame the infidel out of his unbelief.

The Apostle, who foretold their miseries, has also, in his Epistle to the Romans, foretold their restoration, and conversion to the faith of Christ. This glorious event will be to the world, as life from the dead, when "Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and when they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."

In the same compassionate spirit, Paul grieved over the benighted heathen, who, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, walked in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

With these bowels of compassion and earnest longings for the salvation of sinners, he told the Romans, that, "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the Gospel of Christ."

The Lord, whom he so faithfully served in the Gospel of his Son, sustained him amidst all his labours, so that he could say: "I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." This experience of his Saviour's loving-kindness, made him even glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience

hope; and that hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Thus he was strengthened to glorify God in the fires; and to spread abroad the savour of his name.

With the love of God, is inseparably connected the love of our neighbour; for: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also."

Under the influence of this Christian love, the Apostle cheerfully expended his strength, in promoting the temporal, as well as the spiritual welfare of his brethren of mankind.

His religion was of a practical nature; it did not consist in high professions and swelling words; in many promises, and few performances; but in self-denying labours.

When writing to Timothy, he gave him this command: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

To the exercise of the same practical piety, he exhorted the Galatian converts: "Let us not

be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

The second time when St. Paul went up to Jerusalem, he saw James, and Peter, and John, who gave to him and Barnabas the right-hand of fellowship. It was then agreed that he and Barnabas should go unto the heathen, while the other Apostles would go unto the circumcision, "Only they would," writes Paul to the Galatians, "that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do."

The prophet Agabus had foretold by the Spirit, that there would be a great dearth throughout the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.

This period of affliction called into active exercise that grace of love, which, when genuine, evidences itself by feelings of compassion and acts of disinterested liberality. The early Christians were happily united in heart; they formed but one holy family; their interests, their joys, their sorrows, were so blended together, that if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it.

Thus it was at this calamitous season; for the historian informs us, that the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa, which also they did; and sent it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

The Apostle was indeed most forward to remember the poor suffering saints. He used all his

influence with the Gentile churches to furnish them with the means of subsistence, and spared no pains to impress the hearts of believers with the exalted duty of Christian beneficence. "I have," said he to the elders of the Ephesian Church, "showed you all things, how ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said: It is more blessed to give, than to receive."

Though very anxious to visit Rome, in order to benefit the Christians there, by his counsel and ministry; yet he had a work of love to perform, which he felt desirous first to accomplish. He therefore writes: "Whensoever I take my jonrney into Spain I will come to you; but now, I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints; for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the *poor saints* which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are. For, if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure, that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ."

The charitable Apostle was delighted with the liberality of the Macedonian Christians toward the suffering churches of Judæa. To the Corinthians he held them forth as a beautiful model for imitation: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches

of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For, to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering of the saints."

He then bestows a commendation upon the Corinthians themselves: "As touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago, and your zeal hath provoked very many. For, the administration of this service, not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles, by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God, for his unspeakable gift."

With apostolic authority, he might have enforced their obedience, but wishing rather to win them over to the exercise of Christian beneficence, he says: "As ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by the occasion of the forwardness of others, and to

prove the sincerity of your love. For, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich. God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work; being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

How indefatigable was this servant of Christ. Who can view his character, and not glorify God in him. May the contemplation of it, stir us up to an increased desire after that grace which produced in him such holy fruits.

As by a participation in the sorrows of others, we lessen their poignancy: so, by an endeavour to increase the happiness of others, we augment our own.

Let us then embrace every opportunity of doing good to the souls and bodies of men; for opportunity is the flower of time, while the right improvement of it is the fruit. "To a Christian," says the friend of injured Africa, "it must be regarded as an axiom, that an opportunity of doing good, is tantamount to a command to undertake the service. Let us remember, that we have here no option. Our faculties are given to us, not as a property, but as a trust; and we are bound at our peril to forbear availing ourselves of the opportunities which Providence may place within our reach, of doing justice, and showing mercy, of lessening the miseries, and augmenting the happiness, of our species."

How sweetly constraining is the Christian motive to brotherly love: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. Herein is love, not that we loved God, But that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

"One there is above all others,
O how he loves!
His is love beyond a brother's,
O how he loves!

"Earthly friends may fail and leave us,
This day kind—the next bereave us,
But this Friend will ne'er deceive us,
O how he loves!

"Blessed Jesus!—Wouldst thou know him,
Give thyself entirely to him;—
Is it sin that pains and grieves thee?
Unbelief and trials tease thee?
Jesus can from all release thee:
O how he loves!

"Love this Friend—who longs to save thee,
Dost thou love? he will not leave thee;
Think no more then of to-morrow,
Take his easy yoke and follow,
Jesus carries all thy sorrow,
O how he loves!

"All thy sins shall be forgiv'n,
Backward shall thy foes be driv'n;
Best of blessings he'll provide thee,
Nought but good shall e'er betide thee,
Safe to glory he will guide thee,
O how he loves!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EFFECTS OF THE APOSTLE'S PREACHING. HIS PROPHETIC WARNINGS OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSIONS. HIS GLORYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST. HIS TENDERNESS OF SPIRIT. HIS VIEW OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

LIGHT and darkness are not more opposed to each other, than Christianity and Paganism.

If we look at the sages of antiquity, or at the civilized heathens of modern times, and inquire what all their self-inflicted tortures are intended to effect: the answer is given in the streaming blood and dying groans of human victims, whose mangled bodies are supposed to propitiate their angry deities.

Their idols are objects of terror, before whose frightful forms they tremble, and to pacify whose wrath, they blindly rush into the jaws of death.—Their idols are *vices deified*, which mark the source from whence they spring.

Our God is love, rich in mercy to all who call upon him. Our God is holy—the fountain of blessedness to his people.

Love, purity, and mercy are no attributes be-

longing to heathen deities. As in ancient, so in modern days, the peculiar features of idolatry are are obscenity and blood. Such is the worship which Satan has established in the earth: for so St. Paul declares:—"the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God." In obedience to his Saviour's command, the Apostle went forth into all lands preaching to the Gentiles the Gospel of his grace, and labouring in His strength, to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And wonderful was the effect of his labours among these polluted idolaters to whom he made known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

When the Gospel was preached, in these first ages of the Church, it was revealed to the hearts and consciences of sinners with great power. They deferred not their repentance one day, on account of any worldly considerations. They did not stay till they had set their houses in order; neither did the fear of losing their estates, pleasures, or even life itself, separate them from Christ. Crowds of sinners who heard the Apostle preach, flocked into the Church as doves to their windows, turning speedily and without reserve to God their Saviour; so that Zion, with holy admiration, might well exclaim: "Who hath begotten me these?" St. Luke bears ample testimony to the truth of these remarks. After the Apostle's sermon at Antioch, when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, he tells us, "the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath, when almost the *whole city* came

together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy. Then said Paul, seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying: I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

The ministration of the Gospel had this great effect upon them, because, when it was made known by the voice of men externally to the ear, it was applied inwardly to the heart, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, while the law was thundering its denunciations of wrath against sin from Mount Sinai; the Gospel was proclaiming pardon and peace through the blood of Jesus from the hill of Sion.

Then were fulfilled the sweet words of David: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth." But the still more glorious day is hastening on, when Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. His children, begotten to him "through the Gospel, shall then exceed in number, as well as brightness and beauty, the spangles of early dew which the morning discloseth to the delighted eye of the beholder." Oh happy period! when believers shall cover the earth as the dew drops of the morning; when they shall appear in

the beauties of holiness, adorned with humility, faith, hope, love, and all the graces of the Spirit; when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest; when every heart shall be his dwelling-place.

The Gospel, being thus preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, was the power of God unto salvation both to the Jews and Greeks. And now, as then, it is the word of life, of reconciliation, of salvation to thousands of wretched sinners, whose hearts are opened, like that of Lydia, to attend to the voice of Mercy.

Oh! how can we withstand this Gospel of grace, in which such ample provision is made for every need. In the greatness of his love, our heavenly Father has revealed an all-sufficient Saviour, for the removal of our guilt and for our recovery to his favour; and an all-sufficient Sanctifier, for the renewal of our hearts and for our restoration to the privileges of his children.

Being taught by the Spirit, St. Paul knew full well, that he might preach and Apollos water, but that God only could give the increase.

In his Epistle to the Thessalonians, he takes particular notice of this accompanying grace of God: "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. For this cause, thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but

as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe."

The single-hearted Apostle and his fellow-labourers in the Gospel arrogated no power to themselves. They acknowledged their own weakness; declaring that they possessed this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man. This he confessed to the Corinthians, when stating the efficacy of his labours amongst them: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament."

How harmoniously do the graces of the Spirit blend their excellencies in the experience of St. Paul, which like the glorious Arch in the heavens, presents to our view the wonderful work of God.

Oh! that our admiration, may lead us, through grace, to a close imitation of this indefatigable servant of Christ.

The faithful minister of the Gospel has joys and sorrows peculiarly his own. Regardless of all personal inconveniences, connected with his pastoral office, his soul can rejoice when sinners, through his labours, are converted unto God.

Such delight Paul felt, in the midst of all his conflicts: of this pleasure, John partook, when he wrote: "I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth:" and in such pure felicity, will every faithful pastor participate, whose heart is in his work, and whose life is devoted to the cause of truth.

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach

the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. May their numbers and their success be abundantly increased, till the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord.

But with sorrow we have to lament, that the Gospel does not exhibit its primitive power amongst us. Its conquests are few; and the dispensers of it have reason to complain, that they spend their strength to very little purpose.

And why is this? Is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save? or, is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear? Are the truths of the Gospel less important now than when they were first preached? or the threatenings against those who neglect them, less alarming? By no means.

As professing Christians we must seek for the cause of this evil *in ourselves*.

Like those whom our Lord describes in the parable, we are ever ready to frame excuses for not attending to the call of the Gospel. We try to shelter our slothfulness under the plea of inability to do what the Gospel requires; or, from the want of time to seek after the promised strength. Thus we deceive ourselves, till death reveals to us our fatal error.

O! that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end. May the Spirit awaken us to a sense of our danger. What language can exceed the tenderness of our heavenly Father: "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou

hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

We might have supposed, that the world would have grown more holy and more confirmed in the faith of the Gospel, during the lengthening period of the Christian dispensation: but St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy discloses a painful truth: "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron."—"For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

To the Thessalonians he also writes: "Be not shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;—whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, St. Peter declares: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction, and

many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. There shall also come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying: where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation."

From whence arises all this evil in the Christian Church? The springs which supply these bitter waters are clearly revealed in the charges which St. John was commanded to deliver to the angels of the seven churches: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy *first love*. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are *ready to die*. Thou art neither cold nor hot, I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art *lukewarm*, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. This defection of Christian principle, this declension from the holiness of the Gospel, must be traced to the innate corruption of the heart. A growing insensibility to the evil of lukewarmness, a neglect of closet duties, or a heartless performance of them, a want of watchfulness and circumspection, a sinful conformity to the world, an eager grasping after earthly things, bespeak a people fallen from that exalted standard of faith and love which so signalized many of the early Christians from the world around them.

But, if in the days of St. Paul the mystery of iniquity began to work; if John had to rouse the declining churches, and even in the purest age of Christianity had to declare, that many deceivers

and antichrists were entered into the world: let us look to ourselves, lest we fall from our own steadfastness; let us daily examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith; and knowing that the end of all things is at hand, let us seek for more grace, that we may be sober, and watch unto prayer, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If such signs of declension are visible among professing Christians, who still maintain an *outward regard* to the ordinances of the Gospel; what black marks may we not expect to find upon those, who, though called *Christians*, do not pretend to make any profession of religion at all.

These hate the light, and will not come to it. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The world reigns in their hearts, and Satan has the sway over them. They will not part with those sins which the Word of God condemns, nor perform those duties which it enjoins. They may attend a preached Gospel, but they do not hear it with teachable hearts. Their fastidious minds are soon offended with the matter or manner of the preacher. They criticise the style of his discourse, but overlook, or are offended at its home-directed truths. They, being whole in their own estimation, feel no need of the Physician; and would gladly absent themselves altogether from the house of God, did not some secret whisper of conscience, the force of early habit, or a desire to keep up an outward decency of character, restrain their departing steps.

These and other similar causes operate to ex-

clude the light of the Gospel from the hearts of sinners.

O! what a wretched being is man, when left to himself! Every evil nestles in his heart, producing a thousand stings to torment him in time and through eternity.

St. Paul directs us to the contemplation of this misery: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

David, who was well acquainted with the deceitfulness of the heart, describes the wicked man as flattering himself in his own eyes, until his iniquities be found to be hateful.

It is awful to think what delusions men practise upon themselves. Through the artifices of Satan, and the false reasonings of their own hearts, they are deceived to their ruin:

By comparing themselves with those who are more notoriously wicked; and thus thinking themselves good.

By magnifying their supposed virtues, and softening down their vices.

By presuming upon the Mercy of God, as if he were too benevolent to put his threatenings into execution; or in other words, *too good to be true.*

By depending upon a death-bed repentance, not considering that repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit; and that they cannot turn and prepare themselves by their own natural strength, to faith and calling upon God.

By disbelieving the eternity of hell torments, as being a punishment too cruel and severe for the all-bounteous Creator to inflict upon his erring creatures.

By denying the particular Providence of God; esteeming it beneath his glorious Majesty, to inspect their trivial concerns, or to notice each trifling deviation from his law.

By lowering the standard of Christian morality.

By supposing the Almighty to be such an one as themselves.

It is the gracious work of the Spirit to convince the world of unbelief, that radical evil from whence grow a thousand branches, each bearing the most deadly fruit. Unbelief threw a shade over the lovely scenes of paradise, and still shrouds the earth with sadness. It bars the gate of heaven, and opens that of hell. Unbelief blinds the eyes of sinners to the dangers which beset them, and the misery which awaits them.

They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not. While to their worldly interest they are quick-sighted in the extreme, a thick film covers the eye of their minds when the higher interests of eternity are set before them.

The things of eternity, being invisible, are forgotten, or lightly regarded, while those of time, always appealing to the senses, are ever uppermost in their affections.

They know that death will come, but he is now, as they fondly hope, at a distance from them. Hence they sport with lightsome heart along the

flowery path of pleasure, till the unexpected dart is hurled, which hurries them, with all their unpreparedness, into the presence of their Judge.

"Life, and the scenes that round it rise,
Share in the same uncertainties;
Yet still we hug ourselves with vain presage,
Of future days serene and long,
Of pleasures fresh and ever strong,
An active youth, and slow declining age.

"Like a fair prospect still we make
Things future, pleasing forms to take;
First, verdant meads arise, and flow'ry fields;
Cool groves, and shady copses here,
There brooks and winding streams appear,
While change of objects still new pleasure yields.

"Farther, fine castles court the eye,
There, wealth and honours we espy;
Beyond, a huddled mixture fills the stage,
Till the remoter distance shrouds
The plain with hills, those hills with clouds,
There, we place death, behind old shivering age.

"When death alas! perhaps too nigh,
In the *next hedge* doth skulking lie,
There plants his engines, thence lets fly his dart,
Which, while we ramble without fear,
Will stop us in our full career,
And force us from our airy dreams to part."

Thus vain man, heedless alike of present danger and future evil, neglects the blessings of the Gospel, and with awful madness rushes into the everlasting fire.

Is he warned of his danger? He laughs at the credulity of his advisers. Is he invited to accept the offers of redeeming love? He cannot re-

linquish the pleasures of the world. He is willing to run all risks, rather than endure the self-denying requirements of religion. Heaven presents no charms to his vitiated taste. Being earthly, sensual, devilish, his desires are only carnal, and his every step brings him nearer to the pit of hell.

But oh! how great is the change, when the Holy Spirit shines into his heart, and gives him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Evils are then discovered which before lay hidden and unknown. Boasted virtues are found to be rebel sins; and crimes, committed under soft and tender names, are seen in all their blackness.

Thus Paul, in his state of darkness, considered it meritorious to waste the Church of Christ; but when enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, he saw his zeal to be rebellion, and his persecution murder.

In every age, whether barbarous or refined, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness.

The most learned in human science, cannot, by the unassisted powers of reason, discover the glory of the cross of Christ. Their lofty minds cannot stoop so low as to receive, in the simplicity of faith, the humiliating truths connected with, and flowing from, the doctrine of the atonement.

This is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen. Human philosophy cannot perceive the beauty and sublimity of this consecrated way to glory.

But, blessed be God, the poor have the Gospel preached unto them; the poor are made rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom; though never taught to measure distant planets, or to explore with philosophic eye the bowels of the earth. With humble minds they listen to the truth, receive it in faith and love, and through the power of the Holy Ghost, are made holy and happy by it.

David tuned his harp to this delightful subject: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted; for thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favour, our horn shall be exalted; for the Lord is our defence, the Holy One of Israel is our King. Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance."

How triumphant is the power of the cross, which enabled the Apostle to say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." No wonder he was anxious to make known to a ruined world, this mystery of grace, which had filled his heart with joy and peace.

It was at the foot of the cross, that he had

learned to despise all human greatness, and to desire, above all things, an interest in the righteousness of his crucified Saviour.

The glory of the cross threw all the glories of the world into the shade. Vanity was inscribed on all its pleasures, its possessions, and its power. Hence, with Christian boldness he assured the Roman converts: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He declared also to the believers at Corinth: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Deeply impressed with the infinite blessings which flow down from heaven, through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, he laboured to impress the hearts of others, that they, like him, might be made partakers of the grace of God. Through the force of Truth, Felix was made to tremble, Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and thousands, on the day of Pentecost were pricked to the heart.

What effect has the Gospel had on our hearts? Have we been humbled and changed by it? Has it brought us to Christ, the sinner's only refuge from the wrath to come? Is the world crucified to us, no longer swaying our affections,—and are we crucified to the world, being esteemed worthless for Jesus' sake?

The Almighty said to Abraham, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

However much, then, the people of God may be despised, they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

How expressive are the words of our Saviour to his disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt has two properties. By the one, it preserves from corruption the substance with which it is mixed; and by the other, it commuicates to that substance its own savour.—This two-fold benefit is derived to the world from true believers. Through their counteracting influence, the progress of corruption is retarded, and by their example, precept, and prayers, the savour of their spirit is diffused. This blessedness is the work of the Holy Ghost, and is produced through the consistency and persevering labours of the righteous.

The life of the believer is a patient continuance in well doing, a pressing forward toward the mark, a running the race set before him, a growth in grace.

Hence, with much solicitude, Paul wrote to the Colossians to continue in the faith, and not to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which they had heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven; "whereof," he adds, "I Paul am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory, whom we

preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I labour, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily."

As the heart of St. Paul was large enough to contain a whole world, with respect to his desires and prayers for the conversion of every human being to that state of spiritual happiness which he enjoyed; so, he was full of the tenderest sensibilities toward those to whom he had been made the honoured instrument in bringing to the knowledge of Christ.

With what PARENTAL TENDERNESS does he address his beloved converts at Thessalonica and Philippi: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. Ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom of glory." "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

How exquisitely touching are these appeals to the sympathies of our nature. They speak directly to the heart. We can conceive of nothing more endearing than this tenderness of ministerial affection.

The blessed Apostle felt all the father towards

his spiritual children—he exhorted—he comforted —he charged each of them, that he might build them up in the faith of the Gospel.

His Epistle to Philemon is replete with feelings of Christian friendship; in which after having expressed his joy in hearing of his faith and love which he had towards the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints, he thus pleads for Onesimus, the runaway servant of Philemon, who, it appears, had robbed his master:—"Though I might be much bold in Christ to injoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. If thou count me therefore as a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it; albeit, I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord; refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say."

Can any thing be more lovingly persuasive, or more humbly solicitous than these appeals to the heart of Philemon. There is throughout the whole Epistle, a delicacy of sentiment and a pathos which strikingly mark the elevated and refined state of the Apostle's mind.

When parting with such a father in Christ, the elders of Ephesus might well weep sore, fall-

ing on Paul's neck and kissing him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more!

Is this Saul of Tarsus, the murderer of Stephen, the blasphemer of Jesus, the persecutor of the sheep of Christ? What cannot grace effect! Well might Jehovah say: "Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there any thing too hard for me?

The Gospel is truly a revelation of love and mercy; and those who dispense its blessings, and would wish to see them received by the world, must, with St. Paul, exhibit in their own spirit, the loveliness and loving-kindness of the Prince of peace.

This Apostle of Jesus Christ was well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom. Though his heart was full of the tenderest feelings of compassion, yet, he knew how to use the terrors of the Law, as well as the persuasives of the Gospel.

With a masterly hand, he drew the contrast between the Law and the Gospel, showing with admirable precision the effects produced by each.

The Law is the ministration of death and of condemnation.

The Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness.

The Law is the letter which killeth. The Gospel is the spirit which giveth life. The Law, as a covenant of works, though glorious, was done away. The Gospel, as a covenant of grace, by reason of the glory that excelleth, is of perpetual duration. By the Law is the knowledge of

sin. Through the Gospel is the knowledge of salvation. The Law worketh wrath. The Gospel imparteth peace. The Law exhibits God as a consuming fire. The Gospel reveals him as a reconciled Father.

What the Holy Spirit has joined together, let not vain man pretend to separate. The Spirit makes use of the Law and the Gospel in working faith, and it must be the work of preachers to join the Law and the Gospel together. They must awaken and wound by the Law, and they must comfort and heal by the Gospel. By the Law they must strike with terror such as are insensible, and rouse such as are sleepy; and by the Gospel they must pour the soft healing oil of the covenant into the wounds of those who are broken in spirit, and are sinking under the weight of their misery.

This is rightly to divide the Word of Truth, according to the charge given by the Apostle to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth:" that is, dispensing it suitably and agreeably to the state and temper of the hearers.

The promises of the Gospel are not to be laid open to sinners, who are slumbering on beds of sloth, but they must be awakened by the threatenings of the Law. On the other hand, the corroding medicines of the Law are not to be applied to such as are ready to be swallowed up with excess of sorrow, but to them must be administered the strengthening, reviving cordials of the Gospel.

By the Law, sinners must be led to the brink of Jordan; but by the Gospel, they must be carried over Jordan into the promised land of spiritual rest, the earnest and foretaste of heavenly bliss.

It is delightful to observe the wisdom of our Lord; how exactly he suited his counsel to the various states of mankind. The secure and presumptuous he sent to the Law, that they might be humbled. To the contrite and penitent, he preached the Gospel, that they might be comforted. When the rich Pharisee, full of self-conceit, said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I *do* that I may have eternal life?" The answer was, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

When the broken-hearted woman fell at his feet, and spoke in tears the guilt of her life, and the anguish of her soul; "Thy sins are forgiven," was the gracious reply.

Thus the wisdom of God shines forth in all his dispensations. The Law gives us the shadow of good things to come; the Gospel reflects their image more distinctly; while in heaven they will be viewed in the perfection of beauty, and be revealed *in the saints*, in all their fulness of glory.

CHAPTER IX.

PAUL'S DISINTERESTEDNESS. HIS PARENTAL SOLICITUDE FOR HIS SPIRITUAL CHILDREN. HIS SELF-RENUNCIATION. HIS CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE WITH WEAK BRETHREN.

DISINTERESTEDNESS forms a beautiful feature in the character of St. Paul.

It is the appointment of God, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; as the Jewish priests, who ministered about holy things, lived of the things of the temple.

It is also due from a principle of equity, that those who devote their time and talents for the spiritual good of others, should be preserved, by a suitable maintenance, from those anxieties and cares which necessarily attend worldly business.

This equitable provision is clearly ordained of God, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, that the faithful minister may be enabled, with more unfettered spirit, to pursue the arduous labours of his office. "If," says the Apostle, "we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we shall reap your carnal things? Let him that is taught in the word, com-

municate unto him that teacheth, in all good things."

When Paul succeeded, through the grace of God, in forming a church, both Jews and Gentiles instantly united to crush this little company of believers; while some accused him of self-interested motives, as if he only sought a livelihood among the newly converted heathen.

This accusation led him to refuse repeated offers of assistance, that he might cut off occasion from them who thus desired an occasion to misrepresent him. He therefore said to the elders of Ephesus—"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."

Though he had a full right, as a minister of Christ, to the support of Christian believers, for whose sake he expended all his strength, yet from the peculiar state of the infant Church, he made this disinterested declaration: "I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Nothing could be farther removed from the heart of the Apostle than self-seeking, and the love of what he designated filthy lucre. The man who could say: "I die daily;" whose desire was to depart, and to be with Christ; whose affections

were set on things above; and whose life was hid with Christ in God: would feel no hankering after the perishing honours and riches of the world.

His appeal to the church of Corinth is a striking specimen of that eloquence of the heart, which flows from a feeling of conscious integrity: "What is it, wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be, that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong. Behold the third time, I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours, but *you;* for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

Nothing, but the power of the Spirit of Christ, could have produced a feeling so completely opposed to every principle of our fallen nature.

"I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you," is the language of warm affection. It is the expression of an entire surrender of ourselves for the good of those whom we tenderly love; as the Apostle said to the Philippians: "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; for the same cause also, do ye joy and rejoice with me." But to say: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, *the less I be loved,*"—is a glorious triumph over the pride and selfishness of the human heart.

O! that we could see among professing Christians, more of this unwearied, this disinterested love. To possess this grace is to resemble Christ, who went about doing good, even to the evil and unthankful; who prayed for his enemies; who laid down his life for his murderers; and who hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.

Without this heavenly principle of love, which suffereth long and is kind, we shall soon grow weary in well-doing, especially, if our labours be requited with ingratitude. To retaliate injuries is the work of pride; to bear them meekly, is the fruit of humility. He, who is saved by infinite mercy, will cheerfully forgive an offending brother. The spirit of the Gospel is love. Happy is the man, whose soul is cast into this heavenly mould, and receives the image of Him, who is LOVE.

The faithful minister of the Gospel is often called to spend his strength among a people, who, so far from valuing his exertions for their spiritual good, oppose him in every possible way. Yet, he goes on labouring with unwearied patience in the midst of every discouragement. His motives being misjudged, and his character maligned, still, in the strength of that Saviour who sees the sincerity of his heart, he perseveres in his work of mercy. Knowing the value of souls, and the grace of Jesus, he is determined to endure every trial, though the more abundantly he loves, the less he be loved.

This holy perseverance does not, in general,

lose its reward. The Lord blesses such a patient exercise of faith and hope, both to the shepherd and his flock.

Many opposers of the Truth are led, through the Spirit, to submit their wills to Jesus, and to *love the man*, through whose persevering meekness and unwearied forbearance, they have been brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

May each Christian reader, while holding before himself the mirror of Divine Truth, be enabled to discover his own character.

Hast thou, like the disinterested Paul, this holy love to the Gospel of Christ? Canst thou labour for the salvation of sinners, though thy labours be requited with ingratitude and contempt? Dost thou esteem all things which nature admires, as loss for Christ? Is thy heart powerfully drawn toward the people of God, and dost thou love them, because they are the members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost? What are thy views of sin? Is it beheld as rebellion against God, as the crucifier of Christ? Is it hated, opposed, and more and more destroyed within thee? Is holiness the sacred atmosphere in which thou delightest to live? Canst thou say with the heavenly-minded Apostle, I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ? Dost thou esteem it thy heaven, to be with Christ, to be made like him, and for ever to behold his glory?

If, with the deep feeling of humility and self-abasement before God, thy heart can assent to these

important questions, then rejoice, yea again and again rejoice, for He, who hath begun this good work in thee, will carry it on, and perfect it to his own everlasting praise.

True faith, from its very nature, must influence the heart, and cause the fruits of holiness to spring up and abound. When genuine, it works by love, and is never satisfied with any present measure, but is always panting after an increase; since He, who imparts it, is infinite and inexhaustible, and hath declared: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and he shall have more abundance."

Parental Solicitude was an interesting trait in the character of the Apostle. Fearing lest his humiliating sufferings, which he so feelingly described to the Corinthian Christians, should make them ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he says in his Epistle to that church: "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you; for though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every Church."

Where is the zealous minister of Christ, who does not meet with trials, among the very

people, for whose welfare he is expending all his strength?

This holy man had innumerable trials, and those arising from false brethren were not among the least.

Pursuing his former appeal to their hearts, he adds: "now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"

His parental fears were greatly excited for the Corinthian converts. He saw among them much to commend and much to blame.

With what faithfulness does he set before them his holy apprehensions: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Though at a distance from Colosse, he was equally alive to the dangers which surrounded the Christians in that city, from the storms of persecution.

He therefore writes: "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be com-

forted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

With the same fatherly spirit, he exhorted the Hebrew Christians: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

It is truly beautiful to behold this combination of tenderness, with that honest plain dealing which will not suffer sin to remain unreproved upon a Christian brother.

The divinely-taught Apostle was well acquainted with the deceitfulness of the heart and the devices of Satan. He knew the dangers which accompany both the smiles and the frowns of the world, having himself experienced both. His anxieties were, therefore, never dormant, respecting those young believers in Jesus, whose faith might be shaken through the afflictions attendant upon a zealous profession of the Gospel.

Another striking instance of his solicitude is afforded us in his Epistle to the Thessalonians:— "When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timotheus, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the Gospel of Christ, to

stablish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto: When I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by any means the tempter have tempted you, and *our labour be in vain:* but when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you, therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

Then, with expanded heart, he breaks forth into the most joyous thanksgivings to God: "What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Now God himself, and our Father direct our way unto you."

Like the gardener, he was most solicitous about his tender plants; and laboured to screen them from the nipping blast.

By faith and prayer, he daily committed them to Him, who died to redeem them by his blood; and felt assured, that He, who had called them by his grace, would preserve them unto his kingdom and glory.

No one had a clearer perception than St. Paul of the sovereignty of Divine Grace, and the stability of the Divine Promises; yet this did not

cause him to relax in his endeavours, by all possible means, to guard believers against the subtlety of Satan, the snares of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin.

He knew the inseparable connexion there is between the means and the end; that the one, as well as the other, is divinely ordained. To the ship's crew he said: "There shall be *no loss* of any man's life among you,"—and yet he added: "Except these abide in the ship, ye *cannot be saved*."

His constant warning therefore was: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Be not high-minded, but fear. Let no man deceive himself."

How many err in practical religion by following human theories, instead of the Word of God. The purposes of Jehovah, which are secret to us, do not release us from the performance of revealed duties. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and our children for ever, that we may *do all the words of this law*." *Therefore*, when we meet with a plain precept, we should simply endeavour to obey it, without tarrying to enquire into God's hidden purpose.

SELF-RENUNCIATION was a prominent feature in the conduct of St. Paul. Self was swallowed up in that one great object, to promote which all his desires centred:—CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED. He was willing to be esteemed as nothing, so that Christ might be all and in all. The glory of Jesus

was his constant aim, to hold him forth in all his excellencies was his delight, though in so doing, he should be esteemed by the worldly wise, and the great ones of the earth, as a fool for Christ's sake. Thus, with beautiful humility, he told the Corinthians: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your *servants* for Jesus' sake."

In his Epistle to the Philippians we have a most interesting instance of this victory over selfish feeling: "I would ye should understand brethren, that the things which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel: so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

How cheering it must have been to the Apostle, in the midst of his sufferings, to behold the Gospel making its conquests in the palace of Cæsar! At the close of this Epistle he says: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of *Cæsar's household*." Oh! that every palace may be illuminated by the Truth of the Gospel, and by the holy lives of its possessors. Happy is that nation where God is known in its palaces as a sure refuge; where its king is a nursing father, and its queen a nursing mother to his Church. Happy is that nation which is in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.

That the bonds of the Apostle should have emboldened others to speak the word without fear,

when the natural effect might have been intimidation, was a cause for thankfulness. But in the midst of these encouragements, he had to notice, what to many would have been a painful trial: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good-will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add *affliction to my bonds;* but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, *Christ is preached*, and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice: for I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Grace shines with peculiar lustre in this generous feeling of his heart. No spleen, no retaliating passion of envy or ill-will was awakened in his bosom. All his desire was that Christ should be preached and sinners saved. Did any envy his success, or seek to lessen him in the esteem of others? He bore it with patience. Did they preach Christ as the only Saviour of sinners? He could, and did rejoice, even though they preached Christ of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds.

Self was sacrificed to the glory of the Redeemer. This humble servant of Christ felt no keen solicitude about his own reputation, if only the riches of pardoning love, through a crucified Jesus, were proclaimed to the world.

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE, was another lovely

excellence in the Apostle. Understanding well the glorious liberty of the Gospel, he could bear, with much long-suffering, the prejudices of weaker brethren.

How seldom do old established Christians make sufficient allowance for the inexperience and infirmities of young believers, whose minds, just opening to the Truth, have not attained to the stability of the Christian character.

Toward these babes in Christ, much tenderness should be manifested, and much solicitude exercised, as the nurse watches over the first steps of her infant charge.

This lovely part of the Apostle's character is displayed in the following exhortations: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Let us not judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. We that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. If meat make my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Living, as we do, in a Christian country, we have not to encounter the Jewish distinctions of meats and drinks; nor to experience the offence of

meat offered unto idols: yet the duties of charity, forbearance, and self-denial are of perpetual obligation, and in one way or other are called into daily exercise. *

* Through the establishment of Temperance Societies, an opportunity is now afforded, for exercising this forbearing spirit, so beautifully manifested in the conduct of the Apostle.

If he would not eat meat offered to an idol, lest he should make his brother to offend: how much rather should we, as professing Christians, entirely abstain, by voluntary agreement, from the use of distilled spirits, except for medicinal purposes; that, by such an association, we may promote general habits of temperance, and thereby discountenance the pernicious practice of spirit-drinking, which is the fatal source of crime and want, of disease and premature death, and of eternal misery in the world to come.

"Temperance Societies," as is justly stated in the First Report of the London Institution, "lay as their basis, these two principles—Christian charity, and self-preservation.

"If by the use of any article, even of wholesome food, temptation is thrown in a brother's way, Christian charity leads us to abstain.

"The members of Temperance Societies are convinced that the customary use of distilled spirits by the temperate, is decidedly calculated to cast a stumbling-block in the way of their brethren, and therefore they abstain from distilled spirits."

This act of forbearance, though *Christian*, is still inferior to that of the Apostle.

He was willing to forego, what to *himself* would have been *harmless*, lest by his conduct, others might be emboldened to eat what their consciences condemned: whilst we in abstaining from the use of spirituous liquors, abstain from that which is noxious in its nature, and destructive in its consequences, both to *ourselves* and others.

Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.

This was the truly charitable practice of the Apostle: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful for me, (meaning no doubt things in themselves indifferent) but I will not be brought under the power of any. I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Thus, while he conscientiously abstained from whatever might offend the weakest of his brethren, he most carefully avoided, whatever would injure his own soul.

But here the line must be distinctly drawn; for, whilst we yield to the prejudices of weaker brethren, we must never make *sinful compliances* to conciliate the people of the world. Jesus said to his disciples: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers of the false prophets."

If, then, we try to recommend religion, or to remove the prejudice of worldly persons, by departing in *any instance* from our proper character as professing Christians, we deceive ourselves, and discover great defect both in principle and judgment. The apostolic injunction is: "Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. Let your speech be alway with grace. Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Hence our duty is plain; for though we cannot always discourse upon spiritual

things; yet, we must always speak in the spirit of the Gospel; and though we cannot always be engaged in religious exercises, yet, our light must so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

As believing Christians, we must never conceal our principles, nor shrink from an open confession of our faith. If we call Jesus, Lord, we are bound to honour him, by a cheerful obedience to his will, whatever obloquy it may bring upon us. Sinful compliances are never blessed of God to the conviction or conversion of ungodly persons; but often end in the confusion of those who make them.

It may however be asked: did not St. Paul say: "I am made *all things* to *all men* that I might by *all means* save some?" He did—and his language to the Corinthian Church is peculiarly striking: "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

From his whole spirit and conduct, it is evident, that what he conceded either to Jews or

Gentiles, were things which did not in the slightest degree affect the fundamentals of the Gospel. Unlike the Pharisees, he would not strain at a gnat and swallow a camel; or tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, while he neglected the weightier matters of the Law.

The religion of Paul was the religion of the heart,—a religion of truth and love. Though he could bear with the infirmities of the weak, yet, with uncompromising firmness, he maintained the purity of the Gospel. Of this, he has given us two striking instances, which are highly characteristic of his charity and decision. He told the Galatians, who were drawn away by Judaizing teachers from the truth of the Gospel, that he had opposed the circumcision of Titus (he being a Gentile) lest the doctrine of justification by faith should appear to be renounced; and assured them, that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing. While, in perfect consistency with this conduct, he took Timothy, (his mother being a Jewess) and circumcised him, with the simple view of rendering him more acceptable, and his ministry more successful among the Jews. Thus he made a judicious and important distinction, between the essentials and the non-essentials of religion.

Acting on this principle, when Gentiles were converted to the faith of Christ, he could receive them as brethren, and eat and lodge with them, in opposition to the deeply-rooted prejudices of the Jewish nation. And this he did, from his comprehensive view of Christian liberty, which, whilst it delivered him from the bondage of the ceremonial

Law, led him to delight in the expansive spirit of the Gospel.

In his Epistle to the Corinthians he gives us abundant proof of his utter aversion to a party spirit, which, engendering strife and schism, rends and disfigures the body of Christ.

With enlarged heart he loved all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and cheerfully conformed, for the sake of unity and peace, to any custom which compromised no Gospel principle, militated against no Gospel doctrine, and lowered no Gospel precept.

With enlightend mind he beheld the Christian dispensation in its native glory, consisting, not in meats and drinks, not in forms and ceremonies, not in human systems and opinions, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

With holy delight he saw the blessing of Abraham descend on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that they, as well as the Jews might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

With fervent desire, he thus expressed himself to the church of Rome: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that

the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."

Entering fully into the design of the Gospel, which, like the leaves of the Tree of Life, is for the healing of the nations, he was ready to become all things to all men; and to seek the profit of many, that they might be saved. Few, comparatively attain to this exalted standard of Christian experience; for "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

To love the Gospel for its own sake, and to love those who live under its sanctifying influence, though in minor things they differ from us, is to imbibe the catholic spirit of St. Paul. The exclusive love of our own party, which closes our hearts against those who follow not with us, even though they be the followers of Christ, is the very bane of Christian unity, and the fruitful source of evil.

Happy indeed will that period be, when the envy of Ephraim shall depart;—when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephriam;—when all the tribes of the Lord shall love as brethren, and unite with one mind and heart in promoting the glory of Jehovah!

Much wisdom and love, much faithfulness and forbearance are required in the ministers of Christ. Their whole spirit and life should be a comment upon the Word which they preach.

This holy conformity to the Gospel should also be visible in all who profess to believe in Jesus. It was so with many of the Corinthians. With what joy could the Apostle declare: "Ye are our Epistle written in our hearts, known and

read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart."

Also, over many of the Thessalonians he was much comforted: "Ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia, for from you sounded out the Word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak any thing."

A character, so opposite in principle and practice, to that which the world admires, is the work of Almighty Power. "If any man among you," saith the Apostle, "seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

However much an ungodly world may despise the faithful ambassador of Christ, there is a sanctity of spirit, a purity of purpose, and energy of action displayed in his character, which mark him out as a chosen vessel; as one whom Jesus delights to honour.

How important are the titles which he bears in the Word of God:—a pastor, a teacher, a steward, a watchman, a builder, a labourer. How incessant his care, his wisdom, his fidelity, his vigilance, his exertion. Who can estimate the value of such a man, whose life is thus devoted to the cause of Truth? We should honour him, as the glory of the churches, and the messenger of

Christ. We should esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake.

Well might the holy Apostle exclaim: "Who is sufficient for these things?" Truly God only can give, what may emphatically be called, a *minister's heart.* Such a heart of devotedness to Christ was imparted to Paul; and such a heart of faithfulness and love dwells in all who are *truly called* by his grace to serve Him in the Gospel of his Son.

"O! for that flame of living fire
Which shone so bright in saints of old,
Which bade their souls to heav'n aspire,
Calm in distress, in danger bold.

"Where is that spirit, Lord, which dwelt
In Abram's breast, and seal'd him thine;
Which made Paul's heart with sorrow melt,
And glow with energy divine.

"That Spirit which from age to age
Proclaim'd thy love, and taught thy ways;
Brighten'd Isaiah's vivid page,
And breath'd in David's hallow'd lays.

"Is not thy grace as mighty now
As when Elijah felt its power;
When glory beam'd from Moses' brow,
Or Job endur'd the trying hour?

"Remember, Lord, the ancient days;
Renew thy work, thy grace restore;
Warm our cold hearts to pray'r and praise,
And teach us how to love thee more."

CHAPTER X.

ON THE CHARACTER OF ST. PAUL, AS A MAN OF PRAYER. HIS UNBENDING INTEGRITY.

PRAYER is the cry of the new-born soul, the sigh of penitence, the language of desire, the breath of faith.

Contrition, humility, faith, and thankfulness, form the essence of acceptable prayer. He who commands us to pray, can alone impart the spirit of prayer. Our blessed Saviour has not only taught and commanded us to pray, but did Himself set us an affecting example of fervent prayer.

At his baptism, while he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him.

Just before he chose his twelve Apostles, he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

At another time, in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

When great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by him of their infirmities, he

graciously supplied their spiritual and bodily wants, and then withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

"Taking with him Peter, and John, and James, Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening, and a voice out of the overshadowing cloud said: This is my beloved Son, hear him." When his soul was put to grief in the garden of Gethsemane, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, saying: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

Like their Divine Master, all true believers have been, and still are, a praying people. To live without prayer is to live without God in the world. True spiritual prayer is the work of the Holy Ghost. It is the earnest of every promised blessing. A praying soul is a thriving soul; for as all things are possible to him that believeth, so all needful things shall be granted to the prayer of faith.

ST. PAUL WAS A MAN OF PRAYER.—With holy fervour he daily poured out his heart to God, in behalf of the churches which he had planted amidst the wilds of heathen superstition.

As the first evidence of his conversion was: "Behold he prayeth;" so this mark of his adoption into the family of God was never obscured.

In the spirit of a child, he approached God, as his Father in Christ Jesus, and felt anxious that

all within the sphere of his influence should enjoy the blessedness of adoption.

How sweetly did he display this privilege of the believer in Jesus to the church at Rome: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry: Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

This exalted privilege of sonship, the Apostle made known also to the Christians of Galatia: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Happy indeed are they, who are thus admitted into the family of God; each member of which can sweetly sing:—

"My Father God! how sweet the sound!
How tender and how dear!
Not all the harmony of heav'n,
Could so delight the ear.

"Come, sacred Spirit, seal the name,
On my expanding heart;

And show, that in Jehovah's grace,
I share a filial part."

To believe in Jesus with the heart unto righteousness, to love him with a supreme affection, to live under the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, to draw nigh to God with the confidence of children, and to be assured that our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved, is the very essence of Christianity.

How animating is the promise of Jesus to his disciples: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, *believing*, ye shall receive." But some may say: how can we thus pray? Is not faith the gift of God; and are not our hearts naturally averse from this spiritual duty?

Jesus, who kindly supplies all our need according to the riches of his grace, has left nothing undone in his work of mercy. His chosen servant was divinely directed to encourage the hope of sinners, and to animate the efforts of believers. "The Spirit," saith he to the Romans, "helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." Thus provision is made for every Christian pilgrim, who, journeying on his way to Zion, beholds these encouraging words: "ASK, SEEK, KNOCK."

But must souls *dead in sin* be exhorted to pray? Certainly they must; because prayer is

of divine appointment; and because all, without exception, are dependant upon Divine Goodness, and stand in need of Divine Mercy.

Prayer is the cry of need. The infant cries when its necessities are felt; and so does the convinced sinner, when awakened by the Spirit, to a sense of his danger. The humble performance of duty, is infinitely better than a thousand speculations upon it. Man's moral inability cannot take away God's right in commanding, nor man's guilt in not obeying the divine Law.

A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Sinners must therefore be roused from their perilous state, and in the powerful language of Isaiah, exhorted to seek after, and call upon God.—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, saith the Lord."

While men are speculating, sinners are perishing, and Satan triumphing. Time is short. Eternity is opening upon us. Now, and only *now*, is the accepted time. Sinners must therefore be urged to cry for mercy, through the blood of Christ; leaving it with God to bless his own appointed means, who worketh in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

Peter said to Simon Magus: "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and *pray God*, if perhaps

the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee, for I perceive, that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to a multitude of sinners, whom he addressed as the crucifiers of Jesus. And what was the effect produced?—They were pricked in their hearts; and cried: "Men, and brethren, what shall we do?" Disregarding all metaphysical distinctions about the bondage and freedom of the will, Peter, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, thus addressed the convicted multitude: "Repent, and be baptized *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And with many other words did he testify and *exhort*, saying: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Thus, Scripture and Experience attest, in spite of human theories, that, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

If sinners ought to be exhorted to seek for mercy, surely saints must be stirred up to fervent prayer. It is their duty and privilege; their strength and consolation.

How encouraging are the promises of Jesus: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there

am I in the midst of them." Thus a blessing is pronounced on secret, and social prayer. If they who fear the Lord, speak often one to another; how much more will they delight to hold communion with their heavenly Father through the Son of his love.

Reader, is prayer the delightful exercise of thy soul? Are thy refreshments sought for, and obtained, at the throne of grace? Hast thou access, by faith in the blood of Jesus, to the Father of mercies, through the power of the Holy Ghost?

Many are the apostolic exhortations to prayer: "Pray without ceasing—Continue instant in prayer—Give yourselves unto prayer—I will that men pray every where."

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This made St. Paul very desirous to have the prayers of all the churches in his behalf.

He entreats the Thessalonians: "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith."

To the Hebrews he writes: "Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly; but I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."

To the Corinthians: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead;

who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

To the Philippians: "I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

To the Romans: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."

To Philemon: "Prepare me a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given unto you."

These highly interesting extracts show how much even an inspired Apostle valued intercessory prayer. How delightful is the thought, that Christian friends, though separated from each other, may meet in spirit at a throne of grace.

To the true believer, prayer is a precious privilege. At the mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, he pours out his heart, makes known his wants, and derives renewed strength to perform his duties. There he lays his burden at the feet of his Saviour, and there he is filled with peace and joy. Like Hannah, he goes to his God with

a sorrowful spirit, and like her, he returns with a gladsome heart. With David he cries—"Return O Lord, deliver my soul, O save me for thy mercies' sake. And with him he sings—"The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord hath received my prayer. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." Full of faith and love, his bowels yearn over perishing sinners—he makes intercession for all men—stands in the gap in seasons of national judgments—and pleads with his God in behalf of a guilty land.

Thus the praying Christian is the true patriot—the best friend to his native country. Such a national blessing did Elisha esteem the prayers of Elijah, when he cried after the ascending Prophet: "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

Oh! that *our* Elijahs may be jealous for the Lord their God; and lift up the voice of earnest supplication to him that smiteth. For, wrath has gone out from the Lord—the plague is begun. Commissioned by that Almighty Being, whose name, whose Word, whose day is profaned, death has entered our land in its most frightful form.—The pestilence which walketh in darkness, and the sickness which wasteth at noon-day, are now sweeping into eternity the thoughtless and unprepared. How loud is the call—"Prepare to meet thy God." How solemn the warning—"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

O that the servants of Christ, in this our time of danger and desolation, may be stirred up

to fervent prayer. Did we as a nation humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God: did we plead in faith the merits of the GREAT ATONEMENT; then would his wrath be turned away, and his blessing would descend upon us. With united hearts let us supplicate the God of Britain, that His Spirit may be poured out on our king, our princes, our priests, and on all the people of these realms, that England may still be His peculiar treasure—the Ark to bear His Truth—the honoured instrument, in His hands, for evangelizing the world.*

ST. PAUL WAS A MAN OF UNBENDING INTEGRITY.—He may truly be called a transparent character. There was nothing dark or ambiguous

* The most unthinking must surely be awakened to a sense of danger, when that sweeping Pestilence, the Asiatic Spasmodic Cholera, has been brought, by the immediate hand of God, into this country.

Its desolating ravages in India—Persia—and the Turkish Dominions in Asia, Africa, and Europe; its awful effects in Hungary—Russia—and Prussia; its *milder*, but progressive work of destruction in the Northern parts of our own Island, are calculated to arrest the thoughtless—and lead all to listen to the voice of God, speaking to the Nations by this tremendous scourge.—God has evidently a controversy with his people. He has made bare his arm in righteous judgment. But how gently does he deal with us! We have only felt the sprinkling of the storm. If we do not repent, the overwhelming flood may soon descend upon us, hurrying whole cities into one common grave.—Oh! that England may know the time of her visitation; then will God be gracious unto our land, and pity his people.

about him. All was open, ingenuous, sincere. He walked in the light.

Holding sacred the dictates of conscience, he sought its approving testimony! Hence he could say: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

When accused before Felix as a mover of sedition, he boldly asserted his conscious rectitude: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man."

In all ages, the faithful servants of Christ have been charged with fomenting divisions, and turning the world upside down. They have been treated as "pestilent fellows," because they testify of the world, that the works thereof are evil. But, like the upright Apostle, they can appeal with confidence to the Searcher of hearts. He knows their inmost desires to promote His glory, and the best interests of mankind. Possessing these two blessings: "an approving conscience, and a smiling heaven," they can bear with patience the contumely of the wicked, and labour for the good of those who seek their hurt.

As a minister of the Gospel, St. Paul was faithful to his trust. While the priests of heathen deities, the better to delude their votaries, were throwing a veil of mystery around their superstitions; he, as the servant of Jehovah, had no object but to disseminate the light of Truth, no motive but that of fervent love to the Redeemer.

Neither did he shrink from human scrutiny, nor wrap himself up in falsehoods. Like Samuel of old, he could appeal to the churches with fearless integrity: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts; for neither at any time used we flattering words as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness, God is witness."

Thus he appealed to them, with respect to his words, and to God, as touching his heart. They knew that he had used no "flattering words." And, he knew, that God was witness to the inward purity of his motives in preaching the Gospel among them.

Such was the straight-forwardness of St. Paul's conduct. This holy man had no sinister ends in view. He coveted not the passing glories of a world which lieth in wickedness, nor the applause of dying multitudes.—His treasure, and his heart were in heaven. No privation could draw a murmur from his lips, nor cause him to think hardly of his God and Saviour. His anxieties did not spring from selfish considerations, nor from fear of

personal inconveniences. Far otherwise—all his anxiety was, to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ, whatever grief or loss, whatever pain or death, might accompany his labour.

With unspeakable joy he could say to the Corinthians: "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one, we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other, the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ."

Sincerity is a pearl of great price; without it, religion is an empty name. The most gifted talents are of little worth, if unaccompanied by this Christian grace; while, clothed with it, the humblest attainments are pleasing unto God, who seeth not as man seeth.

Religion has its seat in the heart. There, must its power be felt; and from thence, must its light proceed. To possess a single eye, which aims at nothing but the glory of Jesus, and simplicity of heart, which abhors every species of guile, is to possess the spirit of the Gospel.

While the mind is engaged in holy meditations on the glories of redemption, the affections of the heart must be captivated by the love of Christ, and the will inclined to serve him with

all its powers. This is genuine Christianity; the workmanship of God.

"O Saviour, may we never rest
Till thou art form'd within;
Till thou hast calm'd our troubled breast,
And crush'd the power of sin.

"O may we gaze upon thy cross,
Until the wond'rous sight
Makes earthly treasures seem but dross,
And earthly sorrows light:

"Until released from carnal ties
Our spirit upward springs;
And sees true peace above the skies,
True joy in heavenly things.

"There, as we gaze, may we become
United, Lord, to thee;
And in a fairer, happier home
Thy perfect beauty see."

CHAPTER XI.

ST. PAUL'S FAITHFULNESS IN REPROVING. HIS OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

AMONG the many duties which compose the walk of the believer, few are more difficult to perform, than that of Christian reproof.

We might naturally expect that the great Apostle would be faithful in the performance of this duty. And so he was. Under every circumstance, however difficult or delicate, arising either from opposition or affection, St. Paul was a FAITHFUL REPROVER.

By the light of Truth, he could discern the least deviation from the path of rectitude; and guided by a spirit of love, he was ever ready to impart the faithful admonition.

Much wisdom, combined with kindness, is required in the reprover, and much humility, blended with thankfulness, in the reproved; for, "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover to an obedient ear."

Those who reprove must guard against every feeling, yea, even appearance of superiority; lest,

by exciting the pride of the reproved, the intended benefit should be lost.

Notwithstanding the delicacy of this Christian duty, faithfulness must guide its operation, when the occasion requires its severer exercise.

This painful task, the forbearing Apostle had to perform in several instances, which are recorded in the Acts and in his own Epistles. When the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," these holy men were obedient to the heavenly mandate.

Having performed the work assigned to them, they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. The relation of this missionary tour gladdened the assembled church, and called forth many thanksgivings unto God.

Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas: Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname is Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, *and went not with them to the work.* And the contention was so sharp between them, that they

departed asunder one from the other. And so, Barnabas took Mark, and sailed into Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God; and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

The heavenly-minded Paul was well acquainted with his own heart, when he said to the people of Lycaonia: "We also are men of like passions with you." Though we cannot expect perfection in this sinful world, where the holiest of men are compassed about with infirmities; yet we must bewail that warmth of temper, which occasioned such excellent men to separate from each other. How instructive is Scripture Biography.—It not only develops the inward principles of the heart, but makes us also acquainted with the nature and effect of those actions, which these principles produce.

The Bible is a faithful record. There we see man in his real character, whether groaning under the slavery of Satan, or rejoicing as the servant of Jesus Christ. Truth requires no covering, and therefore seeks none.

The faithfulness with which the lives of believers are recorded, forms no mean evidence of the truth of Scripture, which rests its veracity, not on the excellence of man, but on the immutability of Jehovah.

The failings of the saints are detailed with the same impartiality as their graces; nay, are even more minutely described, with the evident intention of humbling our pride, and showing us that salva-

tion is of grace and not of works. The sins of believers, be it ever remembered, cannot be charged upon that holy religion which condemns them, but, upon their own corrupt nature which produces them. Holiness is the peculiar characteristic of the Gospel, and proves it to be from God.

The sacred historian bears testimony to Barnabas, that he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost. He had willingly given up the world for the Gospel's sake: for being possessed of land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. John Mark was his sister's son, for whom he felt, no doubt, much natural affection. He was a young disciple, and not sufficiently strengthened in faith, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Hence he shrunk from the trials which awaited the Apostle in every city; and being most probably overcome by fear, left him at Pamphylia and returned to Jerusalem.

Barnabas, in the spirit of that charity which hopeth all things, was desirous to try him on another journey: but Paul, who well knew the evil of faint-heartedness in the work of the Gospel, and the absolute necessity for a man to be willing to run *all risks*, if ever he would do good as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, remonstrated with Barnabas upon the instability of John Mark's conduct, and the unsuitableness of taking *him*, for a companion in labour, who went not with them to the work.

Hence arose that sharp contention which ended in their separation. Though we would not desire

to justify what is wrong, even in the holiest of men, yet, it is evident, that nothing guided the Apostle, but that uprightness of principle and that devotedness of heart to Christ, which rendered him so abundantly useful to the souls of men.

Painful as was the circumstance, it forms another development of St. Paul's character; while, through the over-ruling power of God, it was made conducive to a more enlarged diffusion of the Gospel of peace.

In his last Epistle to Timothy he leaves this satisfactory record: "Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

Thus he proved himself to be a true believer, by his growth in grace, and his continuance in well-doing. How apposite is the admonition of the Apostle, to all who feel inclined to expose, rather than to correct, the failings of a Christian brother: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest *thou also be tempted.* Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ: for, if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

Thus beautifully were the graces of the Spirit blended in the character of this servant of the Redeemer. He drank into the Spirit of Christ, and trod in his steps. May we go and do likewise.

Another striking instance of his faithfulness in reproving, is related by himself to the Galatians.—"When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

For, before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all: If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

What could exceed the honesty of reproof here exhibited to our view? Did the Apostle speak evil of Peter behind his back? No—he withstood him to his face. Did he shrink from a public, though painful, reprehension of Peter's conduct on this occasion? No—he rebuked him openly, before them all. Did his reverence for Peter's age and character, cause him to palliate or connive at what he conceived to be injurious to the cause of Truth? No—he boldly reproved him, when he saw that he walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel.

This was faithfulness indeed; and no doubt St. Peter well knew how to value it, and to love his brother Apostle for it; for "the ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise."

Consistency of conduct is, at all times, most important, both in ministers and people. On this occasion, there was a want of consistency in Peter's conduct, which Paul condemned.

If he thought it right to eat with the Gentile

converts, he ought not to have separated himself from them, when certain Jews came from James. *By this act*, he either tacitly acknowledged, that he had done wrong, or he was influenced by an undue fear of man. But another and yet more pernicious effect resulted from this inconsistency of Peter's. *In this act*, he frustrated the glorious design of the Gospel, which was to break down the middle wall of partition, and to unite both Jews and Gentiles in one body in Christ; for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Peter was the more inexcusable, as the vision with which he had been favoured to prepare his mind to visit Cornelius, and the blessed fruits of that visit, must have removed his Jewish prejudices, and led him to see, that unto the Gentiles also, God would grant repentance unto life.

St. Paul therefore, perceiving the evil which would arise to the Gentile churches from this conduct of his beloved fellow-labourer, boldly maintained the liberty of the Gospel; which, while it freed the Jewish Christians from the ceremonials of the Law, brought the Gentile converts into all the privileges of the children of God. Hence, he gloried in this blessed truth—"ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

In no stage of our Christian course are we removed out of the reach of temptation, or from the hidden evils of our fallen nature. "By faith

we stand." Nothing but Almighty power can keep us from falling, and enable us, under all circumstances to walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel.

How faithfully did the zealous Apostle also reprove the church of Galatia on account of their being drawn away by Judaizing teachers, from the simplicity of the Gospel. "I marvel, said he, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." And then, with apostolic authority he declares: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again: if any man preach another Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Errors in doctrine, are seldom unattended by defects in practice. If we depart from the purity of the Truth, we shall suffer loss, both in holiness and comfort. This St. Paul knew, and deplored. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the Truth? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. After ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

Few things are more painful, than that which is experienced by the minister of Christ, when he beholds his flock carried away by dangerous errors, and losing their affection for him, through the insinuations and flatteries of false teachers.

No one, not so circumstanced, can fully enter into the heart-felt grief of such a pastor.

With great tenderness of spirit St. Paul then appeals to their former affection for him.—"Ye know, how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the Gospel unto you at first; and my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ. Where then is the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the Truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. I would they were even cut off which trouble you."

With such earnestness did their spiritual father long for their restoration, that he used the strongest metaphor to express his feelings: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you." Who can question the sincerity of a heart which could make such affectionate appeals, and administer such faithful reproof. His

parental heart was grieved that they should so soon forsake him, and listen to the voice of strangers, who sought to lead them away from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This part of the Apostle's history affords an useful lesson to faithful ministers, to watch over their flocks with jealous care, and not to withhold the wholesome reproof, though it may deeply wound; for "faithful are the wounds of a friend."

Of all the offices held by man, none is so important in its nature, and awful in its responsibilities, as that of the CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, however much it may be despised by an ungodly world, or unhappily dishonoured by the unseemly conduct of some who sustain it.

Glorious indeed will be the reward of that man, who, in the spirit of St. Paul, takes upon himself the care of souls, and solemnly engages in the presence, and through the grace of Jesus, "to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children, who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever."

May all who enter into this sacred office, "never cease their labours, their care and diligence, until they have done all that lieth in them, according to their bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to their charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ,

that there be no place left among us, either for error in religion, or for viciousness of life."

The will and ability to perform so great a work, is given of God alone; hence arises the need for earnest prayer, that the Holy Spirit may impart those gifts and graces which are peculiarly requisite in an ambassador of Christ.

"Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impress'd
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly, that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men."

This bright example of a Gospel minister, the Apostle held forth to us in his own experience, spirit, and conduct. As his labours were incessant, so also were his solicitudes for the welfare of the Church of God. In enumerating his trials, he mentions last, as if to mark its peculiar greatness, that which came upon him daily, "the care of all the churches."

We cannot forbear to mention another instance of his uncompromising firmness when ministerial reproof was needed. He deeply lamented the evils which disfigured the Corinthian church: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of

our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you my brethren, by them which are of the house of Cloe, that there are contentions among you. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you, envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

Discarding all idea of personal merit, the disinterested Apostle strikes at the root of popular applause and party spirit. By his deep insight into the human heart, he saw the source from whence these evils sprang—that love of change, that fondness for novelty, that captious spirit, that itching ear, that setting up of one minister above another, which divided the church, and engendered strifes and contentions amongst them. With unwearied solicitude he laboured to counteract these growing evils, that "all who professed and called themselves *Christians*, might be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in the unity of the

spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

St. Paul was well aware that an enemy had done this. As the kingdom of Christ is extended by union, gentleness, and love, so Satan increases his dominion by discord, strife, and hatred.

Knowing the depths of this arch-deceiver, and being jealous for the Truth, he forewarned the Corinthians against his delusions: "There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest." Is not this a word in season? Do not errors and divisions even now weaken the Christian Church, and tarnish her glory? Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments unspotted from sin.

With equal fidelity he apprized the Christians at Rome to beware of schismatics, who would endanger their peace and unity:—"I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly: and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple."

This unwearied labourer was the more anxious for their preservation from these evils, as they were in a prosperous spiritual condition:—"For"—he adds—"your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet, I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

These instances are sufficient to show, that St. Paul was a faithful reprover, that he feared not the face of man. While others were dissembling, or courting popular applause, he could say with honest Nehemiah: "But so did not I, because of the fear of God."

As a Christian, and a preacher of righteousness, the Apostle was obedient to the reigning Power: and cheerfully submitted to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. His religion was the religion of peace and good order, not of strife and confusion. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth." While the rebellious sinner exclaims; Who is Lord over us?—the humble Christian cultivates a spirit of reverential love.

In drawing a sketch of the Apostle's conduct and preaching, we must notice his important exhortations to the duty of Christian obedience to civil government. Having revealed to Titus, the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, he subjoins: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities, and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work; to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."

How beautifully does the Christian character shine forth in this admonition. Were all rulers and subjects brought under the holy influence of the Gospel, then "truth and justice, brotherly

kindness and charity, devotion and piety, concord and unity, with all other virtues, would so flourish among us, that they would form the stability of our times, and make the Church of Christ a praise in the earth."

As it is by the will of God, that kings reign and princes decree justice, St. Paul gives this charge to Timothy: "I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for *all men*."

It is our duty then to pray for all, without any distinction of character; for foes as well as friends, for the turbulent as well as for the peaceable, for distant nations, as well as for our own land. He then adds, and, "for kings and for all that are in authority;" giving this substantial reason for the performance of this duty: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

While the ruling power was *Pagan* and *persecuting*, he gave this admonition to the Christians at Rome: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to

whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."

With equal force he inculcates on the Corinthians the duty of contentment in the station in which God had placed them. This admonition is the more striking, as the word rendered servant, in our version, signifies *a slave:* "Let every man abide in the same calling, wherein he was called. Art thou called being a slave? *Care not for it:* but if thou mayest be made free use, it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's free man: brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

What a disregard is here manifested to outward worldly distinctions, so opposite to the spirit which actuates professing Christians in general.

To Timothy he also writes: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit."

The Apostle considered it of such importance to the peace of society, and so accordant with the spirit of the Gospel, not to render its professors dissatisfied with their civil stations, that he adds: "These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing.—From such with-

draw thyself." So advised Solomon: "my son, fear thou the Lord, and the king; and meddle not with them that are *given* to change."

Writing under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, St. Peter strongly enforced the duty of subjection to the existing powers, on the Christians who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia:—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto the governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Honour all men, love the brotherhood; fear God, honour the king." And then, in his second Epistle he cautions believers against such as were presumptuous, self-willed, despising government, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

"It is the corruption and misery of man's nature" as Archbishop Leighton observes, "that be doth not know, and can hardly be persuaded to learn, either how to command aright, or how to obey; and no doubt many of those that can see and blame the injustice of others in authority, would be more guilty that way themselves, if they had the same power. It is the pride and self-love of our nature that begets disobedience in inferiors, and violence and injustice in superiors; that depraved humour, that ties to every kind of government a propension to a particular disease; that makes royalty easily degenerate into tyranny, and

the government of nobles into faction, and popular government into confusion. As civil authority and subjection to it, is the institution of God; so the peaceable correspondence of those two, just government and due obedience, is the especial gift of God's own hand, and a prime blessing to states and kingdoms. And the troubling and interruption of their course is one of the highest public judgments, by which the Lord punishes oftentimes the other sins both of rulers and people. And whatsoever be the cause, and on which side soever be the justice of the cause, it cannot be looked upon but as a heavy plague and the fruit of many and great provocations, when kings and their people, that should be a mutual blessing and honour to each other, are turned into scourges one to another, or into a devouring fire, as it is in the parable, Judges ix. 20. Fire going forth from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem, and fire from Shechem to devour Abimelech."

May the God of Britain preserve our nation from so awful a catastrophe, by uniting the hearts of all, as the heart of one man, in holy obedience to himself, in loyal attachment to our king, and in brotherly love to one another.

It may be asked: did not St. Paul violate his own precepts when he so awfully denounced the high-priest? If the circumstances of the case be considered, it will be found, that he was not aware that Ananias, then sitting in judgment, was the legally appointed high-priest.

Ananias was acting contrary to the law, in commanding the Apostle to be smitten before he was

found guilty. St. Paul, who knew his hypocritical character, under the influence of a prophetic spirit, pronounced his doom: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall."

On being informed that he was the acting high-priest, he instantly declared his reverence for *the office*, saying: "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest, for it is written: Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

Hence it is evident, that he would not thus have spoken, had he known that Ananias was at that time the officiating high-priest in Jesusalem.*

The genius of the Gospel is love and unity. These fruits of the Spirit were the subjects of our

* The following historical fact will serve to elucidate the Apostle's conduct. Soon after the holding of the first council at Jerusalem, Ananias was deprived of the high-priest's office for certain acts of violence, and sent to Rome, whence he was afterwards released, and returned to Jerusalem. Between the death of Jonathan, who succeeded him, and was murdered by Felix, and the high-priesthood of Ishmael, who was invested with that office by Agrippa, an interval elapsed in which this dignity was vacant. This was the precise time when St. Paul was apprehended; and the Sanhedrim, being destitute of a president, Ananias undertook to discharge that office. It is probable that Paul was ignorant of this circumstance.

With respect to Paul's denunciation, God did smite Ananias in a remarkable manner; for about forty-five years after this, after his house had been reduced to ashes, in a tumult raised by his own son, he was besieged and taken in the royal palace; where, having attempted in vain to hide himself, he was dragged out and slain.

"Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Lord's last discourses, and the matter of his intercessory prayer.

In the first ages of Christianity, prayers and tears were the only arms of the Church, whereby they long defended it from ruin, and at last advanced it to the most glorious prosperity. Happy would it be, were this primitive spirit universal. It is fervent prayer and faithful preaching, that must evangelize both our country and the world.

May all who bear the name of Christ, bear also his holy image. As subjects of the Prince of peace, let us study to promote the blessings of peace. While thus diffusing around us a spirit of Christian charity, we shall hasten on that blissful period, when the din of war shall be exchanged for the harmony of praise; when men shall love as brethren; and when Jesus shall reign in every heart—the UNIVERSAL KING.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OUTLINE OF THE APOSTLE'S PREACHING. HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE HEATHEN, AND OF THE NOMINALLY CHRISTIAN WORLD.

THOUGH virtue be exhibited in all her loveliness, and vice in its deformity: though every thing attractive be brought before the sinner, to win him over to the charms of moral excellence: yet, eloquence, with all its powers, can never change the heart. The moral essay, by its musical cadence and well-selected words, may please the ear and gratify the taste; but Satan despises such a feeble effort to overthrow his kingdom. It is weak as chaff before the wind. With undisturbed repose he keeps his goods in peace, and still remains secure within the citadel of the heart.

What power, then, can dislodge this mighty foe? What voice can bid the dying sinner *live?* Important question! The preaching of CHRIST CRUCIFIED, through whom grace abounds to the chief of sinners, is the weapon wherewith the Almighty Spirit destroys the powers of darkness,—the instrument which he employs to new-create the soul. No human eloquence can effect so great a

work. The glory belongs to Him, who said: "Let there be light, and there was light." The power is from Him, who is pleased through "the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."—How all-commanding are the words of Jesus:—"Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

RUIN,—REDEMPTION,—REGENERATION,—are three comprehensive words, which form the great outline of Gospel Truth. The amplification of the truths which are contained under these terms, with all their various bearings on the present and future destiny of man, composed the substance of the great Apostle's preaching.

How humbling are his views of man's apostacy from God. "We are by nature the children of wrath. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

How consoling are his views of man's recovery through Christ. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He gave himself a ransom for all. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We are justified freely by his grace. He hath made peace, through the blood of his cross. He is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is all, and in all."

How purifying are his views of man's renewal unto holiness. "If any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

This minister of righteousness, receiving his commission immediately from Christ, proclaimed, through divine inspiration, these glorious doctrines of grace; preaching every where, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit accompanied the Word by his sovereign power, and multitudes became obedient to the faith.

The doctrine of a Redeemer, obeying the Law, and dying on the cross for man, is the very hinge of all evangelical revelations; the very life of all evangelical blessings. The doctrine of the atonement, is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel. It is the central point in which all the lines of duty unite, and from which all the rays of consolation proceed.

Faith draws all its hope, strength, and assurance, from the Word, the fulness, and the promises of Christ. It receives from him, pardon with the one hand, and holiness with the other; both, being equally the design of his mediatorial work, and equally the desire of every new-born soul.

St. Paul had no greater joy than to set forth the glories of his Redeemer. Knowing where lay the blessed spring of all his privileges and comforts, his heart glowed with delight, when engaged in making known to others, the unsearchable riches of Christ. By blessed experience, he had learned,

that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, so now grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore he could tell every weeping penitent, these glad tidings of great joy, that, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

How powerful in their operations are the doctrines of grace. They strip man of his boasted excellence, lay him in self-abasement at the foot of the cross, transform him into the image of God, and make him sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Man is naturally proud,—the Gospel makes him humble.

He is naturally carnal,—the Gospel makes him spiritual.

He is naturally worldly,—the Gospel makes him heavenly.

He is naturally dead in sin, and blind to his condition,—the Gospel quickens him to a life of holiness, and enlightens his mind to know himself, and Christ his only Saviour.

The Gospel is good news to poor sinners; the proclamation of a full and free forgiveness of all sin, through faith in a crucified Redeemer. The Gospel is the most glorious Revelation of God to man; the brightest display of his Justice, Holiness, and Love, ever vouchsafed to intelligent beings. Here, we behold the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, planning, executing, and applying the gracious work of human redemption.

In the Gospel we have the strongest motives to gratitude and obedience. It is full of the sweetest promises to every penitent believer, who flies to Jesus for life and salvation.

Let us enquire how this Gospel has come to us. Has it convinced us of our lost condition? Has it truly humbled us in the sight of God? Has it made us apply to Christ in faith, and earnest supplication? Have we experienced a change of heart, being renewed in the spirit of our mind? Do we feel joy in the Holy Ghost, and peace with God through Jesus Christ?

It is easy in these days of the Church's quiet, to pass for religious characters, since few events occur to try the principles of professors. But all is not sterling that dazzles the eye. Many seem to take delight in religious institutions, and to be on friendly terms with their *religious* neighbours, who yet remain, through life, satisfied with barren notions of the Gospel,—and strangers to its renovating power. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from this fatal error. Let us beware of false marks, of a false peace, and groundless hopes; for this truth stands immoveably fixed in the Word of God—"IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE IS NONE OF HIS."

The doctrines of grace, systematically arranged in the mind, while the heart is estranged from God, will profit us no more, than the idea of a valuable estate would benefit a person on the verge of bankruptcy, because its fields, woods, and mansions were vividly painted on his imagination. Without a personal interest in the merits

of Christ, and an experimental acquaintance with his salvation, it is vain to expect admission into the celestial city.

Nominal Christianity neither receives, nor confers a blessing. Thousands pride themselves in the name of *Christian*, as if that were sufficient to secure salvation, in the absence of every holy affection.

Blessed are they, who can unite with St. John in all the fulness of his assurance: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. We know that we are of God. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

As fallen creatures, we need a spiritual discernment, and a spiritual taste. Without the former, a thick darkness respecting the things of God would ever shroud the understanding; without the latter, no real delight in the riches of his grace would be felt in the soul. When these blessings are imparted, we then love Christ above every other object, and obey his Will above every other law.

Pride and the lust of the flesh are continually opposing the humbling and the holy doctrines of the Gospel. Salvation by grace, through faith, is offensive to our pride. Salvation by grace, through the sanctification of the Spirit, is equally distasteful to our fleshly mind.

The leaven of pride is not wholly eradicated, even in the bosom of the humble Christian. There

are seasons when it works with painful violence; and then, the darkness of our minds, and the deadness of our hearts, indicate that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and that Satan has gained an advantage over us.

Spiritual pride is a subtle evil. It slides into our prayer, and entwines itself about our praise. It spoils our best duties, and creates that fondness for human approbation, which puffs up the heart, and steals it away from God. Thus sang Cowper:

"O popular Applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales:
But swell'd into a gust—who then, alas!
With all his canvass set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy pow'r?"

When the Gospel of Christ, that word of life and reconciliation, shall be exhibited in its spirit and power by all professing Christians, happy indeed will the period be! Then the knowledge of the Lord will overspread the earth; for many will go to and fro in the name of the Lord, and knowledge shall be increased.

But have we attained this consummation, so devoutly to be wished? Is this the aspect of the nominally Christian world? Can we say, that in every place—"judgment runs down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream?"

Alas! we have to mourn over thousands, who, while they eagerly grasp after the fruit of the tree of knowledge, despise the infinitely richer fruit of

the tree of life. If knowledge be power, how important, for the well-being of society, that it be founded upon, and drawn from, the Word of God.

Unsanctified knowledge puffeth up. It engenders schisms in the Church, and disorders in the state.

As a Christian people, we may value ourselves upon our benevolent institutions, and religious societies, and think we have done much good in aiding their establishment and enlargement: but has inward piety been the spring of our outward exertions? Has love to Christ been our daily constraining motive? "Bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This, saith the Apostle, is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.

Let us view the two portraits of mankind as drawn by the pencil of eternal Truth, by which we shall see that man, while unconverted to God, is the same internally, whatever change have taken place in his *outward* condition. Behold first the picture which St. Paul draws of the heathen world, and which is a faithful representation of modern Paganism:—"God gave them over to a reprobate mind, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, cove-

nant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

O what a deluge of evil has sin brought upon the earth! Surely, where the Gospel shines, the prospect will be cheering. Happy could we find it so.—Look at the picture which the Apostle again draws of the nominally Christian world, and the heart must sicken at the view.

"In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, *having a form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof."

How awful in their features of evil are these two portraits of mankind. The heathen world, and the nominally Christian world, are essentially the same.

Have we not entered upon these predicted times of peril? Does not iniquity, to a frightful extent, abound amongst us? Are not the elements of confusion now at work? Do not these detailed enormities, both disfigure and convulse the nations of Christendom?

The Papal apostacy is gathering its forces against the truth of the Bible: infidelity is waving its banners in proud defiance. Worldly-minded-

ness and indifference are sapping the foundations of the visible Church. Sensuality and profaneness stain the Christian name. Pure and undefiled religion is branded as enthusiasm. While the humble follower of Christ, who mourns in secret over his country's crimes, and pleads for God before a sneering world, is made a butt for ridicule, and the sport of scorn.

The heart of man naturally revolts against this faithful exposure of its enormities. Our pride fondly shelters itself under the dignity of human nature. We cannot bear to be told, how wicked we are; how very far gone, even as far as possible, from original righteousness. But the Bible is no *flatterer*. It is a faithful mirror, in which we may clearly see, (if we have eyes to see) our real state, divested of all paint and covering. This offends our pride; we cannot endure the sight; therefore we turn away with disgust from this Holy Book, and consider it our enemy, because it tells us the truth.

Is not the language of our hearts too much in unison with those of old, who said, to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceit? And, are there not too many ministers who apply the flattering unction to the conscience, like those, of whom the Lord thus speaks: "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying peace, and there was no peace: and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar; it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the Lord?"

How awakening is the command of Jehovah to all his ministering servants: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.—Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand."

But, when the alarm is sounded, and when sinners are warned to flee from the wrath to come, they treat both the messenger and his message with contempt. They are like the sons of Lot, of whom it is recorded: "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law which married his daughters, and said: up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."

As it was in the days of Lot, even so it is now. When the faithful servant of Christ, with the Bible in his hand, and the love of souls in his heart, lifts up his voice, saying: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction:"—his voice is unheeded;—and with Isaiah he has to mourn—"Lord, who hath believed our report?—I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people."

Regardless alike of the displeasure of the world, or worldly professors of godliness, St. Paul boldly declared: "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.—Now the works of the flesh are mani-

fest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Let us compare these works of the flesh which exclude the soul from heaven, with the already enumerated sins of the Heathen, and the nominally Christian world, and we must tremble for the millions who are living in the constant indulgence of these iniquities, and who are travelling, if grace save them not, to eternal ruin. It may sound uncharitable to the fastidious ear, but the Word of God cannot be broken: "He that believeth not shall be damned. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die."

How faithful is the pen of inspiration. The very evils which we now lament, prove the truth of that Book, which has foretold those miseries that are coming upon the earth.

But let us not despond. The Lord reigneth, be the earth never so unquiet. He guideth the complicated machine of human events, and can, by his over-ruling power, make all these evils finally to promote the spirituality and enlargement of his Church.

Is any thing too hard for the Lord, whose wisdom is as infinite as his power, and whose love is commensurate with eternity?

Let us then, with fervency pray for the gra-

cious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for that promised season of refreshing from His presence, which, descending in showers of blessings upon our country and the world, will transform the moral desert into the garden of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus! look in merey upon thine inheritance; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. Show thy servants thy work, and their children thy glory.

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. PAUL'S PROPHETIC VIEW OF THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST. HIS CAUTIONS AGAINST UNBELIEF AND SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

WHILE drawing the features of our fallen race, the inspired Apostle dipped his pencil in the darkest colours.—But, when consoling the suffering Church, he, like the ancient prophets, presented to the eye of faith the brightest views of future glory.

Wrapt in mystic vision, he saw the blessedness of heaven, and rejoiced in the hope of glory soon to be revealed. With sacred delight he proclaimed the divine purpose and grace, which are now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. It was this glorious hope, this hope full of immortality, this blessed, this lively hope, yea, this good hope through grace, which supported the persecuted saints, and enabled them to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven, a better, and an enduring substance.

The Gospel unfolds to our view a day of wonders; a day, which, like the pillar of the cloud, will give light to the children of God, while his enemies shall be enveloped in darkness. The glories of that day, when Christ shall be revealed in his majesty to judge the quick and dead, were revealed to the favoured Apostle in all its grandeur.

When writing to the church at Corinth, he drew up the awful veil which hid futurity from their view: "I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory."

With equal sublimity he makes known these wonders to the church at Thessalonica: "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

To the Philippians he also gave this animating

hope: "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

What a revelation of grace and mercy is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." A glorious brightness will illumine the morning of their resurrection, when they shall be called to swell the train of the all-conquering Messiah.

But oh! how awful will be the gloom which awaits the resurrection of the wicked! If there be a glare of light, darting through the darkness of that momentous period, it will be the light of vengeance, emanating from the insulted Majesty of heaven, "for our God is a consuming fire." To the wilful abusers of divine mercy, there will then remain nothing but judgment and fiery indignation. The despisers of godliness will find, when too late, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Jesus has graciously forewarned us of the suddenness of his approach.—"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

Taught by the Spirit of Christ, St. Paul thus

warns the churches: "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

The deluge came with fury poured out, sweeping away whole nations, till all the shrieks and groans of drowning millions were silenced in the deep.

Equally overwhelming will be the second coming of Christ: "For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

The earth, with all its idolized possessions, shall then perish in the general conflagration. At the very time, when worldly minds are in eager pursuit after wealth and honour,—the day of the Lord will come. It will come as a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth,—it will come as a thief in the night. But oh! "who shall abide its coming, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

Carnal men may ridicule the warning voice, but He, who cannot lie, has proclaimed, through His Word, this awakening truth: that, "the

heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Death and destruction will be the end of sin and sinners. But God is love. Every truth of His Gospel, when received in faith, has a sanctifying influence on the heart. These sublime revelations of the second coming of Christ, were therefore employed by the Apostle as powerful excitements to the duty of personal holiness: "it is high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." Peter, like his beloved brother, exhorted believers to the practice of universal holiness: "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Will the Church of Christ suffer loss by this awful devastation? Far otherwise. The sinner's

downfal will be the day of the believer's exaltation. How cheering, to every child of God, is the assurance and exhortation of St. Peter: "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Oh! that the Eternal Spirit may awaken our solicitude and quicken our steps to the only Ark of safety. Jesus is the sinner's refuge from the coming storm. Abiding in Him by faith, we shall be quiet from fear of evil, amidst the melting elements, and a burning world. When the wicked are calling upon the rocks and hills to cover them, and to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, the righteous will lift up their heads with joy; for He, who summons the world to judgment, is their Friend and Saviour.

To the Apostles, the second coming of Christ was, therefore, a period of joyful expectation. When they would support believers under the pressure of affliction, they did not draw their consolation chiefly from the prospect of death, as being the termination of their bodily sufferings: but from the glorious appearing of their God and Saviour, who would re-animate their sleeping dust, and complete their glorification in his eternal kingdom. They calmly reposed all their hopes upon the faithfulness of Jehovah; and knowing in whom they had believed, they could strengthen the weary pilgrim, by the sweetest assurances of final rest.

Filled with these bright expectations of future glory, founded on the promises of Jesus, the happy Paul animated the Philippian converts: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

Being well acquainted with the innate evils of the heart, his Epistles are models for ministerial faithfulness; in which, to guard us against false security and presumption, caution is blended with encouragement,—warnings with promises,—and fear with hope.

Many are the hindrances, and many the snares which beset us on our way to glory. The corruption of the heart—the subtlety of Satan—the power of temptation—the fear of man—the allurements of the world—are continually, in one way or other, opposing our journey heavenward. But Christ is our Saviour. His wisdom is engaged to guide us, and his power to uphold and defend us.

Happy then is the man, whom grace has united to the Friend of sinners. Because Jesus lives, he shall live also.—Whilst in the body he lives by faith in the blood of Jesus—by faith in the power of Jesus—by faith in the promises of Jesus. And when out of the body, his perfected spirit shall for ever dwell with Jesus.

Drawing back from God is drawing onwards to perdition. The farther we depart from God the nearer we approach to ruin. How important then is the grace of perseverance. The distinguishing mark of true believers consists in their abiding in Christ, and evidencing that union by the fruitfulness of their lives. Mere outward profession is no certain indication of inward piety, neither is a long continued profession any safeguard against declension or final apostacy. Who would have thought, that Solomon, the wisest of men, who built so magnificent a temple for the worship of Jehovah, and who prayed so fervently at its dedication, would, in his old age, have been turned away after other gods, and been led even to build high places for the abominations of the heathen !—Surely he who trusteth to his own heart is a fool.

After many years of promise, the heart may discover its insincerity, should God be pleased to bring the professor of his religion, into the furnace, either of prosperity or adversity. Demas fell through the love of this present world ; the stony ground hearer withered away, beneath the scorching beams of persecution. Nothing but the grace of God can keep us from falling, either partially, or finally. Can we then be surprised, that the well-instructed Paul, who preached the Gospel of the grace of God with such unmixed purity, should guard its possessors against the wiles of Satan, and the remaining corruption of their hearts ?

Having explained to the Corinthians, the spiritual privileges of the Israelites, he tells them: "But with many of them God was not well pleased,

for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. All these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Then, for their confidence in the faithfulness of their Redeemer, he adds: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

In like manner the Apostle showed the Hebrew converts the danger of unbelief as exemplified in their own history: "With whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in, *because of unbelief*."

With close self-application, he then presses this fact on their consciences: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief—for, there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

Lest an undue fear of losing heaven should arise in their hearts from the awful examples

which he had brought before them, and so cause their hands to wax feeble, and their feet to grow weary; how delightfully does he compose their apprehensions by a view of the tenderness and the all-sufficiency of Christ: "Seeing that we have a Great High-Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence, stedfast unto the end."

What a wonderful display of mercy and judgment is also revealed to us in the eleventh chapter to the Romans. The Apostle himself was so overpowered by the view of the divine sovereignty, that like a person standing on the brink of some vast abyss, he exclaimed: "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

The Jews, as a people, having rejected their Messiah, were to be cut off because of unbelief: while the Gentiles, embracing the offers of mercy through faith in the blood of Christ, should be grafted into the good olive tree—the Church of God.

But, lest this grace should be abused through spiritual pride, the Apostle, with his wonted fidelity,

guards them against an evil so offensive to God: "Boast not thyself against the branches. But, if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then: The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he also spare not thee."

Is then the promise made to Abraham come utterly to an end? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Can his truth fail? St. Paul answers these questions: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved. As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

To the disputer of this world, who impiously cavils at the dispensations of Jehovah, and measures His dealings by the scanty line of human reason, we would say with Zophar: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

True humility is the basis of excellence in the

Christian character. The humble believer will not dare to arraign the eternal God before the bar of his finite understanding. His language and feeling are those of the Psalmist: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments;" while with the lowly-minded Apostle he asks with profound admiration:—"Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or, who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen.

True humility is ever accompanied by a patient continuance in well-doing. How important to all who desire an interest in those blessings which shall terminate in eternal glory, are the words which Jesus spoke to the Jews who followed him: "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed, and we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

To continue in the Word of Christ, we must first know it; and in order to know it, we must diligently study it. But as a peculiar state of heart is required to the right understanding of the Word of Christ, which we have not naturally, we must be earnest in prayer for the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit. As new-born babes we must desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby. In the spirit of children, we must receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls. With humility and teachableness we must sit at the feet of Jesus, and listen to his voice.

But, to receive rightly the Word of God, we must *abide* in the doctrine of Christ. We must continue stedfast in the profession of the Truth. We must not be carried about by every wind of doctrine, but have our hearts established, and our hopes rooted and built up in Christ. We must walk with holy perseverance in the precepts of the Gospel, not starting aside like a broken bow, nor drawing back unto perdition; but going on with progressive step from grace to grace, till we appear before God in glory. If we are enabled, through the power of the Holy Ghost, thus to study, receive, and abide in the Word of Christ, evidencing our union to Jesus by the fruits of righteousness: we shall be privileged to enjoy the sweet promises of the Gospel; for our Lord hath declared: "Then are ye my disciples *indeed*."

How expressive is the word—indeed. It implies, that all who seem to be disciples, are not disciples *indeed*.

This was the case with some of those Jews who surrounded our Saviour when he made this declaration. "They were offended at his doctrine, and walked no more with him."

Are no such instances of defection to be found amongst us? Do we never see some, who, having run well for a season, turn back again into the world? When Jesus appeals to our affection, as he did to that of his disciples: "Will ye also go away?" Can we reply with Peter's sincerity: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Stability in the truth of the Gospel, and continuance in well-doing, are

essentially requisite, if we would be disciples indeed.

To the persevering believer, Jesus has promised eternal glory: "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The question, then, for self-examination is not so much what we *were*, as what we *are*. If we are now cold, indifferent, and worldly, it matters not how zealous we might once have been. Our former state of zeal and active exertion can yield us no present profit, except as it thunders in our ears: "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works."

O! may we never substitute knowledge for grace, profession for principle, words for practice, nor zeal for love.

The tinselled Christian may gain the admiration of those who regard the outward appearance, but he will never be approved of by Him who looketh at the heart.

When God teaches, he teaches to profit; and the effect of his teaching is visible to all, by the renewal of the heart unto holiness. Hence our Lord does not say merely: "Ye shall *know* the Truth;" but, as if he intended particularly to guard his followers against resting in barren speculations, he subjoins: "And the truth shall make you *free*."

The truth, received into the heart, makes the

believer free, from the condemning power of the law, from the pollution of sin, from the tyranny of Satan, from the fascinations of the world, from the fear of death, from the torments of hell.

Learn then, thou follower of the lowly Saviour, to bear contempt with cheerfulness, when contempt is poured upon thee, because thou art a disciple *indeed*, and boldly confessest thy faith and hope in the atonement of Jesus.

It is easy, in a circle of Christian friends, to admire humility, and to descant upon the duty of bearing reproach with patience: but when we find ourselves really despised,—when we are set at nought, where we expected to be honoured: then is the time, when pride and mortified self-love will rankle in our bosom, and when our utmost vigilance will be required to overcome these evil workings of the flesh.

At seasons like these, let us look unto Jesus. Let us consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds.—Let us remember what he suffered for our sakes, though Lord of all, that we may be abased at the sight of ourselves, and lie in self-abhorrence at the foot of the cross. And for our encouragement to persevere, let us never forget his own gracious words: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven."

How blessed then is the *Christian indeed.* He follows the Lord fully; his every power is devoted to his service. He knows the truth through the teaching of the Spirit; he receives the truth in

the simplicity of a little child; he continues in the truth, amidst errors of every name; and abiding therein, firm unto the end, he obtains, at length, through the merits of his Saviour, that crown of glory which fadeth not away.

O that we may all be Christians indeed, the meek and lowly followers of the Lamb, bearing his image in humility, love, and purity, till we each resemble him in his perfection of beauty, when we shall see him as he is, in his eternal kingdom.

"Thou God of holiness and love,
Whose name transports the saints above,
In their celestial spheres;
On Thee, in feeble strains I call,
And raise my humble voice with all
The heav'nly choristers.

"O! might I with thy saints aspire,
The meanest of thy dazzl'ing choir
Who chaunt thy praise above:
Mix'd with the bright seraphic band,
May I a heav'nly harper stand,
And sing redeeming love.

"What extacy of bliss is there,
While all the happy spirits share
In never ending joys:
What more than extacy, when all
In holy adoration fall,
At Jesus' glorious voice.

"Jesus! the heav'n of heav'ns is,
The fount of purity and bliss;
And while on him we gaze,
And while his glorious voice we hear,
Our spirits are, all eye, all ear,
And silence speaks his praise.

"Oh! might I die, that awe to prove,
That bliss of pure extatic love
Before the GREAT THREE ONE!
To dwell in his eternal joy,
To find an ever sweet employ
In songs around the throne."

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. PAUL'S DOCTRINE ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

THE doctrine of justification by faith, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is the grand characteristic of the Gospel, which distinguishes it from all human schemes of salvation.

It is the revelation and work of God himself. Its design is, to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness.

This doctrine is founded on the truth of man's guilt and of God's Justice. The latter, demanding a sinless obedience to the moral law, the former, unable to satisfy its righteous claims.

Through the fall, we lost the image of God, and all power to serve him aright. Being destitute of every holy principle, and enslaved by every evil passion, we can neither atone for past transgressions, nor perform *one act* of acceptable obedience.

Foreseeing our wretched state, through original and actual sin; a God of love has provided a RANSOM, a RIGHTEOUSNESS, and a REFUGE for us.

St. Paul was honoured of God to proclaim these heavenly truths: "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a *Ransom* for all, to be testified in due time. Of Him, are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *Righteousness*. We have strong consolation, who have fled for *Refuge* to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

O that our hearts could expand with faith and hope; then, with the Apostle we should delight to dwell upon this exhaustless theme, and with feelings of the liveliest joy, should thank our God for his UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

Being taught by the Spirit to know himself as a sinner, this enlightened Apostle had learned to value Christ as a Saviour. Wholly weaned from self, his heart was fixed upon Christ, the true foundation. With uncompromising firmness he could therefore assert: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ: even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

This glorious truth of the Gospel, so opposed to all his ancient views and feelings, he saw with a distinctness which no carnal reasoning could obscure. Beholding, by the light of Revelation, the wide extent of Adam's transgression, he could unite with David: "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unpro-

fitable; there is none that doeth good—no not one." Hence the Apostle was led to this humbling confession: "The law hath concluded all under sin, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

Hearing the voice of justice in all its awfulness, with Job he abhorred himself in dust and ashes.—Hearing the voice of mercy speaking peace through the blood of Jesus, with Mary he rejoiced in God his Saviour.

Full of grateful love, he went forth into all lands, to make known these unsearchable riches of Christ:—that Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;—that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us;—that all who believe, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified, by the Law of Moses;—that, "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference;" for the Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed;—that, there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of Lord, shall be saved."

Knowing these statements to be the Truth of God, and knowing also the legality of the natural heart and its enmity to the doctrines of grace, he boldly asks the self-righteous opposer: "Do we then make void the Law through faith?" Do we lessen the sanctions, or lower the standard of a

Law, so holy in its nature, so just in its requirements, so good in its tendencies? "God forbid,—yea, we establish the law;"—we maintain its unalterable holiness, its inflexible justice, its irreconcileableness to the smallest transgression.

Through the light of the Holy Spirit, he saw with an inspired clearness of perception, that no sinner can be saved by any obedience of his own; since, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," unable to screen us from the wrath of God, who hath declared: "the soul that sinneth it shall die." He therefore fled to Christ for refuge; found shelter under the covering of his perfect righteousness, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.

This fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, so destructive to pride and self-sufficiency, this divinely-taught Apostle found to be the very source of consolation, strength, and hope.

Having given the church at Philippi a catalogue of those things which once constituted his Pharisaical treasure, he makes this noble declaration; "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any

means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Then, with his usual humility and self-abasement, he acknowledges his need of still increasing supplies of spiritual blessings; "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

If the Apostle, than whom perhaps no saint was ever more holy, thus confessed his shortcomings; if he regarded his attainments as nothing, when compared with what remained to be attained; if all his hopes of heaven were reposed upon the finished work of his beloved Saviour; how humble, how dependant ought we to be, who stand at so great a distance from this honoured servant of Christ!

Yet, how encouraging is the view of his character and experience. He, who converted Saul of Tarsus, can now change the heart of the hardest sinner. Let none then despair of mercy, who feel a longing desire after salvation.

"Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the *fitness* he requireth
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you; 'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

The offence of the cross has not yet ceased, nor ever will, so long as pride bears its sway in our hearts. We cannot part with the fond conceit which we naturally have of our own works. If Christ must be our justifier, we hope, at least, to have some share in the meritorious act of justifying. We cannot brook the thought of being *wholly* indebted to another.

Owing to this proud attachment to our supposed goodness, much error exists in the Christian world. The great doctrine of justification by faith only, cannot, therefore, be too clearly and scripturally stated. How many, even in this our day, darken counsel by words without knowledge. They are blind guides, groping, as in the dark, amid the full blaze of Gospel light. With all humility of mind, and earnest prayer, we should seek for light to discover the Truth, and for a heart to embrace it when discovered.

Let us then consider in what way a sinner is justified in the sight of God, that we may rightly apprehend and thankfully embrace, through the Spirit, this inestimable blessing.

1. We are justified *meritoriously*, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who became obedient unto the Law for man; and who, while we were yet sinners, died for us, that being justified by his blood, we might be saved from wrath through him.

2. We are justified *instrumentally*, by faith only, which is the gift of God, the hand that receives the blessed Jesus, and puts him on with all

his saving merits, as the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation.

3. We are justified *declaratively* by good works, which are the fruits of faith, and evidence our union to Jesus Christ as living branches in the true vine.

Every blessing flows from the throne of mercy through Jesus Christ, who is the only medium of communication between earth and heaven; while all our services ascend with acceptance, only as they are covered with his infinite merits, and washed from their pollution through his precious blood.

Jesus is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS: he is made unto us righteousness; and we are made the righteousness of God in him. Hence God can be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. The way of access is now opened. In Christ, we have boldness, and access with confidence, to the Father of mercies; and obtain, through faith in his blood, a right and title to the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Thus we are made complete in Him, and the kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers.

It must however never be forgotten, that there is nothing *meritorious* in faith. It is a grace, wrought in the heart of the sinner, through the power of the Holy Ghost, whereby he apprehends Christ, and is made an heir of God, through him.

We have nothing whereof to glory, being "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

The language of our heart must ever be: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

As faith is the gift of God, and the *root* of holiness, so works which do not spring from faith, cannot be acceptable to God; because, without faith it is impossible to please him.

By nature, our hearts yield nothing but evil fruit, and this evil produce continues, till we are united to Christ by faith. When grafted, by the Spirit, into Jesus the living vine, we receive a new nature, and bring forth new fruit, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

This good fruit manifests itself by holy obedience to the will of God; it is *declarative* of our interest in the righteousness of Christ through faith, and prepares us for the enjoyment of heaven.

From this scriptural view of a sinner's acceptance with God, it is evident, that we cannot be justified without faith; and yet, we must not look to it, as that which justifies us. Our eye must be fixed on the righteousness of Christ *only*. When our acts of faith are the strongest, we must not rely upon them, as yielding any merit, or as recommending us to God. Our language must then be: I have believed in Christ, and God has justified me; but I will not believe, that God has pardoned me *for my faith;* I know that I must trust in Christ, if I am accepted of my Judge: therefore I will banish for ever, all thoughts of my being pleasing to God, for the sake of my act of believing.

Whoever steers this course will provide for

his present comfort, and future safety; for it is only men's ignorance of themselves, of the Law, and of the essential righteousness of God, that puts them upon trusting in any thing they can do for their justification before God, and hinders them from submitting to the righteousness of Christ.

Faith resigns up the soul to the mercies of God, and the infinite merits of Christ, and has no confidence in the flesh: it brings the sinner to look on all things as nothing, and not fit to be *joined to Christ*, who is the only foundation for his reliance: and then his care is, how to be found in the righteousness of Christ, and to place the crown of glory on the head of his Redeemer.

This was the experience of St. Paul, who counted all things but loss for Christ, desiring only that he might be found *in Him*.

If the doctrine of justification by faith were therefore rightly apprehended, as set forth by the great Apostle under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it would prevent that unscriptural mixture of faith and works, as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, which destroys its nature, tarnishes its glory, and endangers our salvation.

"O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heav'n's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan!
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscrib'd above the portal from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quick'ning words—BELIEVE AND LIVE.
Too many shock'd at what should charm them most,
Despise the plain direction and are lost."

Although St. Paul was the champion for this glorious doctrine of justification through faith, yet with equal ardour he enforced the necessity of holiness on the hearts and consciences of believers.

As those who preach the Gospel with faithfulness, should exemplify its excellence by their superior sanctity, the apostle exhorted Titus to the practice of universal holiness: "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine; in *all things* showing thyself a pattern of good works."

Equally comprehensive was his charge to this young minister of the Gospel, whom he called his son after the common faith: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." "Put them in mind to be ready to every good work."

This faithful pastor over the Lord's flock closed his Epistle with a general admonition both to ministers and people, who professed an attachment to the Gospel of Christ: "Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."

So decided were his views respecting the nature and necessity of sanctification, that, in perfect accordance with the doctrines of grace, he declared: "In Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all

men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

With these earnest desires for the fruitfulness of believers he prayed in behalf of the Hebrew converts: "The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight."

Some persons, who are opposed to the doctrine of free justification, endeavour to set St. James in array against his brother Apostle, as if he were anxious to counteract his statements, and to disprove his conclusions.

If they will study the Epistles of St. Paul and St. James, with simplicity and prayer, they will soon find, that there is neither antinomianism in the one, nor any ground for legality in the other:—but that the Apostles are in perfect agreement with each other. Like the radii of a circle, they meet in one common centre. They both select the case of Abraham. St. Paul says: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." St. James says: "Abraham believed God. and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:" each quoting the words of Moses: "He believed God, and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Thus they conjointly build on the same foun-

dation, viz: that Abraham was *justified by faith.* Where then is the difference of their statements? It arises from the abuse which was made of this divine truth.

St. Paul declared, that all works, whether ceremonial or moral, are excluded from the office of justifying the sinner in the sight of God: that we are justified freely by his grace, as the *source*, and by the blood of Christ, as the meritoriously procuring cause.

But this blessed doctrine, so full of comfort to the broken-hearted penitent, was soon perverted by men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth. They slanderously affirmed, that St. Paul had said: "Let us do evil that good may come;"—and hence, they took occasion to sin, on the impious principle that grace might abound.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, expresses his abhorrence of such vile inferences, drawn from his preaching; and strenuously enforces the necessity of good works.

St. James, with equal force, levels his Epistle, not against the holy doctrine preached by St. Paul, but against those abusers of divine grace, who, under pretence of exalting Christ, only wanted a license to sin. So early did Satan labour to bring an odium upon the Gospel, by the unholy lives of hypocritical professors. To counteract this evil, St. James declares, that the faith which justifies is a *working* faith:—That as kind words, and good wishes will not feed a starving brother, while unaccompanied with the needful supply; so neither

will faith profit us, if it hath not works; 'for as the body, without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also; that by works, faith is made perfect: and therefore, that such a barren faith, as these corrupters of the truth propagated, could never save the soul: since by works a man is justified, or *declared* to be in a state of justification, and not by faith only, that is a faith unproductive of good works.

"The sum of the matter then is this; What God has joined, none must divide: and what God has divided, none must join." He hath separated faith and works in the business of justification, according to St. Paul, and none must join them in it. He has joined them in the lives of justified persons, as St. James speaks, and *there* we must not separate them. St. Paul assures us, that works have not a co-efficiency in justification itself: but St. James assures us, that they may and *must* have a co-existency in them that are justified."

It is evident, therefore, from the Scriptures of Truth, that neither faith nor works can procure our admission into the heavenly temple. Christ, as our Great High Priest, can alone enter by his own blood into the Holy Place. In heaven he sits as a priest upon his throne, and there, appearing in the presence of God for us, his living care will perfect, what his dying love began. Through him then we must approach the mercy-seat; by him we must enter into the celestial city. O! how precious is our Almighty Saviour. To him we must look—on him we must depend—from him we must draw every needful blessing. His name

is as ointment poured forth. He is the balm in Gilead, the physician there.

O that our hearts may ever be in tune, to sing the praises of the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood, till we join the universal chorus in the world above, and crown him Lord of all!

CHAPTER XV.

ON JUSTIFICATION—CONTINUED.

THE doctrine of free justification, through faith in the blood of Jesus, was the Gospel Axe which Luther applied with powerful arm to the root of human merit, whose fibres had struck deeply into the Papal soil.—"When I consider," said this champion for the Truth, "the infinite profanation which always hath raged in the Church of God, against this only and well-grounded rock, which we hold to be the article of our justification, (that is to say, how not by ourselves, neither by our works, which are less than ourselves, but by another help, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ, we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil, and are made partakers of eternal life,) I am compelled boldly to speak upon it." And he did speak with a voice of thunder. Through the power of Truth, he made the Papal chair to tremble. By the light of truth, he exposed the hidden abominations of the MAN OF SIN.

Yet, while he declared, that the doctrine of

justification by faith without works, is the only SOLID ROCK, the true test of a standing, or of a falling church; like St. Paul he was equally anxious for the interests of holiness.

He knew the blindness of the natural heart, and its enmity to the truth. He knew also the darkness which remains in the minds of the regenerate, even after they have been enlightened by the Spirit of God.

Hence, he foresaw that diversity of sentiment and statement which would arise in the Church, according to the degrees of light or darkness, which each of its members might possess. Under this conviction, he honestly confessed that, "to teach this doctrine, and at the same time, to insist on the necessity of good works, is a matter of considerable difficulty and danger. For unless the ministers of Christ be wise and faithful dispensers of the divine mysteries, and know how to divide the Word of Truth rightly, the distinct provinces of faith and works will be confounded.

"Both these provinces should be explained, and impressed on the mind with the greatest diligence, yet in such a manner, that each of them may preserve its proper bounds:—Otherwise, if works only are taught, as is the case in the Pope's kingdom, faith is lost. Again, if nothing but faith is inculcated, carnal men soon begin to dream, that there is no need of good works."

Well acquainted with the corruption of the heart, Luther thus guards the Church against the abuse of this vital doctrine: "There is danger on both sides. If the doctrine of grace or faith be

not preached, no man can be saved; for it is faith alone that justifies and saves. On the contrary, if faith be preached, as of necessity it must be, the greater part of mankind will interpret the doctrine in a carnal way, and so understand spiritual liberty, as to allow indulgences of the flesh. This we may see in all ranks of life, high as well as low. Many make profession of the Gospel, and boast of Christian liberty, and yet, serving their own lusts and inclinations, they give way to covetousness, pleasures, pride, envy, and such other vices, and none of them doeth his duty faithfully. It is impossible that persons of this description should prove to be governed by the Gospel of peace."

The Church of England, in unison with the other Reformed Churches, firmly holds this important branch of the Christian faith. In her eleventh Article she declares:—

"We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

The clear and scriptural language of the Homily referred to, is as follows:—

"The Apostle toucheth specially three things, which must go together in our justification. Upon God's part, his great mercy and grace: upon Christ's part, justice, that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption by the

offering of his body, and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly: and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but God's working in us.

"The grace of God doth not shut out the justice of God in our justification, but only shutteth out the justice of man, that is to say, the justice of our works, as to be merits of deserving our justification. And, therefore, St. Paul declareth here nothing upon the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, which, nevertheless, is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God. And yet, that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified, but it shutteth them out of the *office of justifying*. So that, although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not altogether; neither doth faith shut out the justice of our good works, necessarily to be done *afterwards* of duty towards God, (for we are most bounden to serve God in doing good deeds commanded by him in his Holy Scripture all the days of our life,) but it excludeth them so, that we may not do them to this intent, to be *made just by doing them*."

What language can more fully and explicitly convey to our minds this fundamental truth of the Gospel?

May the Eternal Spirit impart unto every reader of these humble pages, if he has it not,

this blessed gift of faith, and abundantly increase it, where it has been graciously bestowed.

Hooker breathes the same apostolic language: —"Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us, if we be faithful, for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful, yet even the man that is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin, being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin remitted through repentance, him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin, by not imputing it, taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded him in the Law. Faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification, and Christ the only garment which, being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures, hideth the imperfection of our works, preserveth us blameless in the sight of God, before whom otherwise the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea to shut us from the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter."

Such were the views which Luther, the Fathers of the English Church, and Hooker entertained, in perfect accordance with the great Apostle, respecting the all-important doctrine of justification by faith. "The Devil directs his fiercest batteries against those doctrines in the Word, and

those graces in the heart which most exalt God, debase man, and bring men to the lowest subjection to their Creator. Such is the doctrine of justifying faith."

May this jewel of the Reformation never be covered with the worthless paint of human invention, but ever shine in all our churches with its native lustre.

Christ is the enricher of the believing soul. He is the pearl of great price. It is not the hand which receives an offered treasure that makes the receiver rich, but the treasure itself. So neither do works, nor any act of faith justify us, but *Christ Himself* whom we apprehend. And this faith, be it weak or strong, is yet able to receive the righteousness of Christ, just as a palsied hand may receive a jewel from a king, as truly, though not so firmly, as the hand which is sound. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and receive a new and divine life in our souls.

Peace of conscience, tranquillity of mind, strength to resist sin, delight in holiness, and the hope of glory, are some of the precious fruits of faith. Love accompanies faith, as the light does the sun, and faith working by love evidences our adoption into the family of God, and proves that we are truly born from above.

"The kingdom of grace," as an old writer beautifully observes, "is the suburbs of the kingdom of glory; he therefore who walks not through the suburbs shall never enter into the holy city. A man must be in the kingdom of grace, or else he shall never be admitted into the kingdom of

glory. No grace, no glory. No holiness, no happiness. No regeneration, no heaven, nor heavenly honour. For, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

"It is then an infallible sign of holiness, when a man doth more and more strive against his own unbelief, and labours continually to draw nearer and nearer unto God by holiness.

"To feel our inward corruptions, to desire a deliverance from them, to avoid occasions of sin, to be angry with ourselves for our sinning, is an evidence that the Spirit of God hath taken possession of our hearts, and hath begun to work a most happy change within us.

"Where these graces are, there is also the God of grace, the spirit of grace, a man of grace, a true dying unto sin, and a living unto God. Sin is dismounted, the soul is renewed, for God's image is restored."

Thus all who are justified, are *sanctified*, and shall be finally glorified. The renewal of our nature is so essential to happiness, and so indispensably requisite as a preparation for heaven, that without it we cannot be saved.

The pure in heart only shall see God: they shall see his face; they shall dwell in his presence; and reign with him for ever and ever.

How bright is the glory which encircles the cross of Christ.—There, all the divine perfections meet and harmonize.—There the robe of righteousness is imparted to every believing sinner.

With the fullest assurance of hope, the bless-

ed Apostle felt his personal interest in this righteousness of the Redeemer; and could say with unwavering confidence: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Happy Paul! who in the midst of all his sufferings could thus realize his union to Christ by faith.

Are we, like him, crucified with Christ, and become dead to sin and to the world? Does Christ live in us by his Spirit? Are we daily living a life of faith in the Son of God? Can we, with sweet assurance say: "Who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*?

This believing appropriation of the Saviour's merits, is the spring of comfort,—the root of holiness.

This blessedness St. Paul experienced, when Jesus revealed himself in all the fulness of his grace. Under every varying scene of life *we* also shall partake of this felicity, if with him we can say: "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."

O how peaceful and fruitful is the believer, when daily living under the influence of the constraining love of Christ.

It is the love of Christ, felt and enjoyed, which softens the roughness of life, and smooths

the ruggedness of the way to glory. Sin produces thorns which pierce the heart with many sorrows, but Jesus, by removing the evil, fills the soul with gladness. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? As the heart knoweth its own bitterness, so a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.

How humbling is the language, how self-abasing are the feelings of the believing sinner, when contemplating these wonders of redeeming love.

Methinks I hear such an one thus pouring out his heart in secret:—

I am indeed a guilty, corrupt, and ruined creature, unable to appease a justly offended God, or make the least atonement for my violations of his law. I am in myself helpless and hopeless. Ah! whither then shall I turn my eyes for succour?

Can any of my fellow mortals deliver me out of the wretched condition, into which I am plunged, through original and actual transgression? They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.

Shall I turn my eyes towards the angelic host, and crave the assistance of the highest seraphim? It is hopeless expectation. I have sinned against an infinite God, who demands an infinite satisfaction. They are creatures like myself, and have nothing infinite to offer.

To whom then must I look?—May I for a moment hope, that the Infinite God, before whom

the angels veil their faces, will condescend to save me from merited destruction, by giving the required satisfaction to his own adorable perfections?

But how can God, who is a spirit, make atonement for my sins, since he has declared, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Will the Eternal Jehovah stoop so low, as to take upon him my nature, and suffer in my stead? Will He become a son of man, that I may be made a child of God?—"Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear O earth—for the Lord *hath* done it."

Such condescending mercy could never have been conceived by men or angels, had not God himself revealed this mystery of love in the Volume of his grace. His own arm has brought salvation. He hath visited and redeemed his people. He hath magnified the Law, and made it honourable. He is become THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; the justifier of the ungodly.

O wonder of wonders!

"Not to be thought on, but with tides of joy,
Not to be mention'd, but with shouts of praise."

O rich revelation of mercy! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,

and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; and, being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had, *by himself* purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being so much better than the angels, as he had by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Almighty God, enable me, through the mighty power of thy Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus; to love him with all my heart; to trust in him as my atoning sacrifice, my justifying righteousness; my purifying fountain, my hope of glory. Give me a growing delight in thy Holy Word, which reveals these riches of thy grace to sinners. May I prize it as my greatest treasure, and study it as my highest wisdom. Impart to me the spirit of illumination to understand its truths, and to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fulness of God. Give me more and more of thy quickening grace; stir

CHAPTER XVI.

ST. PAUL'S EXPERIENCE IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

SANCTIFICATION is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, transforming the soul of the sinner into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Holiness is therefore the beauty, as well as the happiness, of the soul. But while, we remain in the body, we are renewed only in part.

The mortification of sin is fitly compared to crucifixion, which is a painful lingering death;—hence the conflict between the flesh and the spirit will end only with life. So long as we live in the body, sin will not wholly die; therefore the believer finds perpetual need for watchfulness and prayer, and for a constant application to the blood and grace of Jesus.

St. John enforces the two following important truths, which seem at first sight to militate against each other, but when understood by Christian experience, they are found to be in perfect agreement.

The one is: "If we say that we have no

up my languid affections, subdue my inward corruptions, and enable me to persevere in the ways of holiness, till death be swallowed up in victory; and grace be ripened into glory.

" Great God, when I approach thy throne,
And all thy glory see;
This is my stay, and this alone,
That Jesus died for me.

" How can a soul condemn'd to die
Escape the just decree?
A vile, unworthy wretch am I,
But Jesus died for me.

" Burden'd with sin's oppressive chain,
O how can I get free?
No peace can all my efforts gain,
But Jesus died for me.

" My course I could not safely steer
Through life's tempestuous sea;
Did not this truth relieve my fear,
That Jesus died for me.

" And Lord, when I behold thy face,
This must be all my plea;
Save me by thy almighty grace,
For Jesus died for me."

sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

The other: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

By the first, the Apostle pronounces it self-deception to suppose that we can attain in this life to a state of sinless perfection. By the second, he declares it to be contrary to the nature of a child of God, to live in the *allowed* indulgence of any sin.

The Scriptural evidence of our being born of God, and, of his seed remaining in us, does not therefore consist in an absolute freedom from sin whilst in the body, but in our abhorrence of it, in our fighting against it, and in our not living in the habitual practice of it. For, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as God is righteous." Those who are regenerated may be termed just and perfect, yet it is only in comparison of the wicked, who are in bondage under sin; not with any reference to the infinitely holy law of God. They may be also called perfect in another sense, because like infants they have all the parts of a Christian, though not the perfection of those parts. All the seeds of grace are sown in their hearts, but they have not the full growth of them in this life. Their graces are indeed constantly unfolding themselves, and advancing to higher degrees of ripeness, but heaven is the only place where the *perfection of holiness* can be found; because there, the spirits of just men are made perfect, who,

"having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, shall serve God, day and night in his temple." Whilst in the body, we we must experience that conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which is the occasion of much joy or pain, in proportion to the strength or weakness of these opposing principles.

The life of the Christian is a daily combat.—Those persons are little acquainted with it, who feel no inward struggling between nature and grace. It is true, that some pious persons are less exercised than others with internal conflicts; but every view which the Scriptures give us of a life of faith, is connected with exertion and opposition both from within and from without. It is called a race—a warfare—a pilgrimage. Hence believers are exhorted to run, that they may obtain the prize; to fight, that they may gain the crown; to persevere, that they may reach their promised rest. For, "as the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, so the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." The Christian has been compared to a boat placed upon a rapid river, which, if it be not advancing against the current, must of necessity, be carried down by it. To oppose the stream, would require a power not its own. Just so it is with the believer. He has to contend against a torrent of inward corruptions, known, perhaps, only to God and his own heart; and having lost, through the fall, all spiritual strength, he feels utterly unable *of himself* to resist them. He therefore looks continually unto Jesus, and being strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, is enabled to

stem the stream, and thus to prove that he possesses spiritual life and vigour.

How characteristic of the Church in her militant condition, is the description which Solomon has clothed in the richness of Eastern imagery: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" "The sun," as Leighton beautifully remarks, "is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened: so the believer is perfectly justified, but sanctified only in part. His one-half, his flesh, is dark; and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon, to which the sun is not subject at all: so the imperfection of a Christian's holiness, is the cause of so many waxings and wanings, and of the great inequality in his performances; whereas in the mean while, his justification remains constantly like itself. This is imparted. That is inherent"

Equally characteristic of the helplessness of the Church is the interesting enquiry: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, *leaning* upon her beloved?"

Is Christ the beloved of our souls? Do we behold in him infinite beauty, grace, and power? Are we reposing our souls upon his faithfulness and truth; leaning only on the hope of his heavenly grace? Drawn by the Spirit, are we coming up from this wilderness-world, a world of sin and sorrow, and journeying, through the strength of Jesus, to the paradise above?

Some persons, unacquainted with the depth

of human corruption, think, that to be good, is an easy attainment. Their standard of goodness, which consists in amiability of temper, a freedom from grossly vicious habits, and a benevolent desire to relieve the indigent, our fallen nature may reach. A well-directed education, the moral tone of the circle in which we move, and a decorous observance of the outward forms of religion, have each a tendency to civilize the mind, and to give a certain air of excellence to the character. But all this is very far below the standard of evangelical holiness.

Barnabas was called a good man, because, "he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." St. Paul, who was no flatterer, bore this testimony to the Roman Christians: "I am persuaded of you my brethren, that ye are full of goodness." On what he founded this assertion, he himself informed them: "Ye are the called of Jesus Christ.—Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.—Your obedience is come abroad unto all men."

How opposite is the goodness which the world admires, from that which God approves. The one, like the morning cloud and early dew, passeth away: the other, like the rising sun, shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The love of God in Christ, a conformity to his image, a hatred of all sin, a renunciation of worldly lusts, and an entire devotedness of heart to the divine will, constitute that goodness which is pleasing unto God, and which can only spring from an union to Christ, by faith, through the

power of the Holy Ghost. This happy state is attended with much conflict, arising from the remainders of sin in the regenerate. A battle must be fought, but the believer who dies fighting against sin, will die conquering, through the blood of Jesus.

The experience of eminent Christians is always interesting and instructive. All have to pass through the strait gate, and to travel along the narrow way. Many are discouraged, because they think their trials are peculiar to themselves, and such as no spiritually-minded believer can experience.

Being afraid to disclose their griefs, they suffer much inward distress from the dread of self-deception and hypocrisy. Satan, taking advantage of this state of mind, strives to confirm their fears, by casting his fiery darts into their souls, and impelling them onwards to the brink of despair.

But Jesus will not suffer *his sheep* to perish. What Satan meant for evil, he overrules for good. These trials, though severe, cut up self-righteous hopes by the root, and lead the trembling believer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to the foot of the cross, where peace, and strength, and victory, are obtained.

They can now with freedom open their hearts to some fellow pilgrim, and are surprised to find, that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren that are in the world. Thus they are comforted and encouraged to persevere. May every Christian reader take encouragement when thus tried; for the God of all grace, who hath called

us, (if believers in his dear Son,) unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, will, after we have suffered awhile, stablish, strengthen, settle, us. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Paul, when he became a subject of divine grace, was made to groan under the burden of indwelling sin, which, in his unconverted state, sat lightly on his conscience.

The unregenerate, who are revelling in sinful pleasures, can form no idea of the pain which a holy mind feels, when an impure thought is presented to the imagination. Those things which the wicked dwell upon with delight, are distressing to the pure in heart. When, therefore, we hear the believer in Jesus, mourning over his corruptions, and loathing himself for all his abominations, it is not because he has, in every instance, *cherished* iniquity, but because it is offensive in all its actings to his new-born soul. With the tried Apostle he can say: "We that are in this tabernacle, do groan being burdened,—and are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, this spiritual conflict is described in such humiliating terms, that by some, it is supposed to relate to an awakened Jew, seeking justification by the works of the Law, or, to an unconfirmed believer, struggling with feeble strength against the power of indwelling sin. They cannot conceive that St. Paul is relating his own experience, when, in his advanced state of Gospel sanctification, he says: "I am carnal, sold under sin."

As the design of this little work is to be experimental, and not controversial, and as the holy Apostle makes use of the *first person*, we will take it for granted, that he is speaking of himself, and thus endeavour to draw that benefit from his experience, which we believe he intended to convey to the Christians at Rome.

Having declared, that believers are dead to the Law by the body of Christ; and that the Law, so far from subduing the evil passions, is the innocent occasion of stirring up their opposing lustings, the Apostle asks: "Is the Law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust except the Law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'"—Here he probably describes his earliest convictions. It was then the Tenth Commandment, reaching to the desires of the heart, which brought him to a sense of guilt and condemnation. For, he declares: "I was alive without the Law once, but when the commandment came, (perhaps the Tenth Commandment more especially, in all its spirituality and power,) sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."

In his unenlightened state, he was evidently working *for life*, instead of *from life received*. He was forming a righteousness of his own, grounded on his obedience to the outward letter of the Law, and which he conceived to be blameless, as he told the Philippians, when summing up his Pharisaical merits. But, when his eyes were opened to see his guilt and pollution, he found this very

Law in which he trusted, and from which he expected so much reward, to be unto death, condemning him, as a breaker of it, to eternal destruction. "For sin," he adds, "taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."

O that we may learn true wisdom from this experience. Sin first deceives, and then slays the soul. Well might the Apostle warn the Hebrew converts, lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

How carefully does this experienced Christian guard the Church at Rome against the least idea of the Law being the *cause* of sin; for he immediately declares: "The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is *good* made death unto me: God forbid." Sin is the only cause of death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." If Adam had never sinned, death would never have reigned over the human race. "But," says the Apostle, "sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good, that sin by the commandment"—contrasted with its spotless nature—"might become exceeding sinful."

It is sin then, and not the holy Law of God, which works death in the soul, and effects its ruin. The Law convinces and condemns. Sin defiles and destroys. So frightful is sin in its nature and consequences, that nothing but itself can adequately express its vileness,—"that sin might become

exceeding sinful." Surely none but fools would make a mock at sin, or treat with levity the awakened sinner, who is seeking deliverance from its guilt and power.

The Apostle proceeds: "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal." Here he draws a contrast between the purity of the Law, and the carnality of his fallen nature; and when brought to this standard of perfect holiness, he perceived at once, through the light of the Spirit, the pollution of his best actions.

But how strong the expression which he now uses: "sold under sin."—What? the Lord's freeman, sold under sin? Could he, like Ahab, sell himself to work wickedness? Impossible.

The believer, whose experience is here described is not said *to sell* himself, he *was sold* under sin. This implies something passive, rather than active.

We may be said to be *sold*, with respect to *original sin*, which taints our whole nature, before we can perform one act of the will. When we have attained to the exercise of our mental faculties, and are duly awakened to a sense of our abject condition, we resemble slaves, who are longing for deliverance, and yet cannot emancipate themselves from their hated bondage. Through the remainders of corruption, we have to struggle and fight against the sin that dwells within us, and which is ever seeking to entrap us by its deceitful wiles: but, as the servants of Jesus Christ, we can never be the *willing* slaves of sin; this is totally adverse to the spirit of the Gospel, and

marks with awful blackness the subjects of Satan's kingdom.

This seems to be the meaning of the Apostle's declaration, for he adds with much simplicity and sincerity: "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not, but what I *hate*, that do I." Thus confessing how much it distressed his renewed mind, to feel this inward struggle against the holy principle of grace. The whole bent of his mind and will was toward God and holiness; therefore, he could affirm for his own comfort,—"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good."

His will was averse from sin and inclined to the holy Law of God; on which account he could declare without hesitation:—"Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." As if he had said—It is not the newly implanted principle, the new man in Christ Jesus which thus labours to throw off the restraining power of the Law, but sin, the unrenewed part of my nature, which still dwells within me. "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh," (my corrupt and unregenerate nature) "dwelleth no good thing: for to will," (through the power of converting grace) "is present with me, but how to perform that which is good" (through the remainders of corruption) "I find not."

How important is self-knowledge. "I know," saith this experienced saint, "that in me dwelleth no good thing."

This is not the language of a proud Pharisee, or of a self-righteous professor of Christianity, but

of an humble believer, taught of God to know himself, to feel the plague of his own heart, and to bewail his corruptions with unfeigned sorrow.

How did the Apostle know, that in *him* dwelt no good thing; that is, as he himself explains it, in his *flesh* or unrenewed nature? Because he was constrained to acknowledge: "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." He therefore places this distressing experience to the account of indwelling sin: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I" (my renewed nature) "that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

At length he comes to this conclusion: "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me."—I cannot shake off this hated inmate, nevertheless, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man."

This proves that the experience here stated, is that of a truly converted person, under the teaching of the Spirit; for an unregenerate man could not *delight* in the Law of God after the inward man, that is, with all the powers and affections of the renewed mind.

"But," he adds: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."

Thus, while grace was urging on to higher and higher degrees of holiness, these Canaanites in the land were opposing his progress, and trying to bring him into their hated captivity.

Feeling most deeply his utter helplessness

under these distressing conflicts, he is compelled to cry out with doleful lamentation: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall rescue me from this loathsome body of sin, which I feel so closely attached to me, and from which I cannot escape?

Job, and David, and Isaiah, and other eminent saints, have been forced to make a similar cry, when labouring under the conscious burden of indwelling sin.

But, what joy does the Gospel bring to the heavy laden soul; what relief to the disquieted conscience!—One believing glance of a crucified, exalted Saviour, can drive away a legion of inbred evils, and deliver the oppressed soul from all its burdens.

The happy saint, having, by an act of faith, reached the foot of the cross, now breaks forth into an extacy of delight: "I thank God," who giveth me the victory, "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Every fresh application to the blood of the Atonement, brings fresh peace and strength to the soul, and is the sovereign antidote to the evil of sin.

For the consolation of every tried believer, who has thus to endure the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the Apostle draws this blessed conclusion: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit: for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made *me*

free from the law of sin and death; for what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Christian reader, are thy feelings in unison with those of the Apostle? If thou canst not read thy experience in this seventh chapter to the Romans, thou hast no right to the comforts of the eighth.

When the motions of sin are felt within thee, how dost thou act respecting them? Are they suffered to work unmolested in thy heart; or, are they, when perceived, immediately resisted by the prayer of faith? Do these perceptions of inward corruption give thee pain; or are they treated with indifference, so long as the inward evil does not become an outward sore? Canst thou say with the Apostle, "to will is present with me. I consent unto the Law that it is good; I delight in the law of God after the inward man." And, when the cry of agony—"O wretched man that I am," is extorted from thee under the pressing burden of conscious corruption, does a believing view of Jesus, as thy *righteousness* and *strength*, become, at once, the death of thy sins, and the life of thy hopes? If so, then take the full comfort of the Apostle's assurance, that to thee, there is no condemnation, while thou evidencest thy union to Christ, by walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It has been quaintly, but truly remarked, that the Cross-bearer shall be the Crown-wearer. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the outward trials which they have to encounter in common with the rest of mankind, would be easily borne, were it not for the plague of their own hearts, which greatly adds to the weight of temporal affliction.

Their desire is to have their wills swallowed up in the Will of God, and with filial affection to kiss the hand that smites. But alas! too often they have to mourn over a rebellious spirit, which makes sad inroads into their spirituality and peace.

Being taught of God to know themselves, and to abhor sin, they daily wrestle with this inbred evil.

The weapons of all-prayer and faith in the blood of Jesus arm them for the combat. Looking unto Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, and confiding in his love, whose grace is sufficient for them, and whose strength is made perfect in their weakness, they endure unto the end, and obtain a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

"O vain heart, where art thou roving;
What proud wishes in thee swell?
Canst thou hope for God's approving?
Art thou fit with him to dwell?

"Do those empty joys ensnare thee
Which frail mortals prize so high?
Or do faith's bright visions bear thee
To the portals of the sky?

" There are times when I can cherish
Fondest hopes of heav'nly rest;
Soon, too soon, they fade, they perish;
All is gloom within my breast.

" O how desolate and dreary
Are those hours of lonely grief,
When the mind, depress'd and weary,
Seeks, but cannot find, relief.

" Gracious Lord, thy righteous dealings
With our sinful race below,
Prove thee faithful, though our feelings
Like the ocean, ebb and flow.

" Hear my fervent supplication,
And thy strength and peace restore;
Fix me on a firm foundation,
That I may be mov'd no more."

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT—CONTINUED.

WE have seen the sentiments of the Saxon Reformer respecting that corner-stone of the Reformation, the doctrine of justification by faith; how zealous he was for the absolute freeness of divine grace, and yet how jealous for the interests of holiness. We will now consider his views and feelings with regard to the Christian's conflict between the flesh and the spirit.

"It is very useful," says Luther, "for sincere and pious persons to know and meditate on Paul's doctrine concerning the contests of the flesh and the spirit. It is an admirable comfort to the tempted.

"When I was a monk, if at any time I happened to feel the motions of a bad passion, I used to think the prospect of my salvation was completely over. I struggled in a variety of ways both to overcome the bad passion, and to quiet my conscience. All in vain. The lust of the flesh returned, and I was harassed with thoughts of this sort: Thou has committed this, or that sin; thou art impatient, thou art envious; in vain hast thou

entered iuto holy orders. Now if I had rightly understood Paul's doctrine of the flesh lusting against the Spirit, I should not so long and so miserably have afflicted myself. I should have reflected, and said, as I do at this day in similar situations: Martin, as long as thou remainest in the flesh, thou wilt never be entirely without sin: thou art now in the flesh, and therefore thou must experience a contest with it; and this is agreeable to what Paul says, the flesh resisteth the Spirit. Despair not thou then, but strive manfully against all carnal dispositions, and fulfil not their lustings. Do this, and the Law shall have no condemning dominion over thee."

In the same self-abasing spirit, he speaks of himself and his fellow-labourers of the ministry: —"We ourselves, the ministers of the Gospel are not so active and zealous in doing our duty, now that we have the light of Truth, as we were before, during the darkness of our ignorance. We are grown cold and negligent in handling the Word, and in prayer also; and lastly, both in well-doing and in suffering; insomuch, that if Satan did not torment us internally, with spiritual temptations, and externally, with hostile persecutions, and above all, with the contempt and ingratitude of our own congregations, we should become, I fear, quite careless, and lazy, and lost to every good work."

Happy would it be for the Church, if this picture did not apply to modern times. But, blessed be God, we still have men amongst us, who, like Luther are valiant for the truth upon

the earth; who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and who are not ashamed to confess Christ before a sinful and adulterous generation. May their number increase a thousand-fold.

Luther laboured to bring back the Christian Church, not only to the purity of the faith, but to the practice of piety.

He therefore adds: "Truly religious persons crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; and hence their sins do not finally ruin them. For, if they obey the flesh by gratifying its concupiscence, they infallibly lose their faith and the Holy Ghost. Moreover, if they do not abhor their sins, sincerely repent, and return to Christ, that they may recover their faith and the Holy Ghost, they will die in their sins. Wherefore I can speak no comfort to those who dream they have faith, and yet *live in sin.*

"Against all such, there is a dreadful sentence in force; namely: 'They that live after the flesh shall die. And further, the works of the flesh are manifest: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, and such like: they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'"

Luther then shows in what way true believers are kept from falling into gross sins, and how they are enabled to persevere even unto the end: "The severe threatenings of Almighty God against sin," he observes, "have a due effect upon the minds of true believers, so as to deter them from breaking his laws. They arm themselves with the Word of

God, with faith, and with prayer, and do not give way to the lusts of the flesh. In fact, they so resist the flesh, as to nail it to the cross with all its sinful desires. Hence it is, that the flesh, though yet alive, and capable of showing some signs of motion, cannot perform what it would, being bound hand and foot, and nailed fast to the cross. Such are the principles, and such is the practice of truly pious persons. The same important truths may be expressed a little differently thus: The faithful, while they live on earth, do actually crucify the flesh; that is, though they are sensible of its lustings, they do not obey them. Furnished with the armour of God, namely, faith, hope, and the sword of the Spirit, they oppose the natural or carnal man; and with these spiritual arms, as it were, with nails, fix him to the cross of Christ, and compel him against his will, to be subject to the spiritual man, or new creature. Afterwards, when they die, they entirely put off the carnal man, and they will rise from the dead, with a body incorruptible, and free from sinful affections and lusts."

Thus clearly did this zealous Reformer, declare, in unison with the Apostle, that there are two principles of action within us, flesh and spirit; and though we cannot entirely put off the flesh or kill it, we must fight against it, and strive to subdue it, till we put off our mortal body, and enter that blessed state, where,

> "Flesh and sin, no more controul,
> The sacred pleasures of the soul."

The Church of England maintains the same truth with equal clearness in one of her Collects: "O Lord, raise up thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas through our sins and wickedness, we are *sore let and hindered* in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us."

Also, in the ninth Article: "Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit. And this infection of nature doth *remain*, yea, in them that are *regenerated*, whereby the lust of the flesh is not subject to the law of God."

This remnant of corruption in the converted sinner is powerfully pressed upon our consciences, as a cause for deep humiliation in the Homily, on the misery of man:—"Let us all confess with mouth and heart, that we be full of imperfections: Let us know our own works of what imperfection they be, and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge any part of justification by our merits or works. For truly, there be imperfections in our best works: We do not love God so much as we are bound to do, with all our heart, mind, and power: We do not fear God so much as we ought to do: We do not pray to God, but with great and many imperfections: We give, forgive, believe, live, and hope imperfectly: We speak, think, and do imperfectly: We fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh imperfectly: Let us therefore not be

ashamed to confess plainly our state of imperfection: Yea, let us not be ashamed to confess imperfection even in *all* our *best works*."

Surely spiritual pride cannot luxuriate in such a soil as this. The deeper are our views of the sin that dwelleth in us, the more humbly we shall think of ourselves, and the more gratefully we shall prize our salvation by Christ.

What St. Paul felt in his own experience, he strongly enforced upon others. To the Christians of Galatia he writes: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth agninst the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But, if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the Law. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This is true blessedness, to live under the daily influence of the Holy Ghost, and through his power to overcome the lustings of the flesh.

The conciousness of indwelling sin made the Apostle say to the Corinthians: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." What need would there have been for this self-government, if he had attained to a state of sinless perfection?

Were sin wholly destroyed in the hearts of believers, and in consequence of this happy liberation from evil, were they delivered from the fear of falling: St. Paul would not have given this admonitory exhortation to the Thessalonian Chris-

tians: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence even as the Gentiles, which know not God: for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The knowledge where his strength lay, enabled this good soldier of Jesus Christ to declare: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Satan, taking advantage of these remnants of evil in the hearts of believers, is constantly labouring to excite opposition against the holy principle of grace implanted in the soul. Hence St. Paul, whose care over the infant churches was incessant, thus admonishes the Christians at Ephesus: "My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

Believers then must be strong *in the Lord*, for they have to encounter a mighty adversary in an

evil day. But let them not fear; for through the power of Jesus they shall prevail, since He, who is in them, is greater than he that is in the world.

As a father exhorts his child, so does the tender-hearted Apostle his beloved Timothy: "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." And like a general, experienced in this holy warfare, he animates the Christians at Corinth to the spiritual combat: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

But who is sufficient for these things? What feeble arm, or what human weapon can successfully oppose the powers of darkness? He who calls us to the combat, opens the spiritual armoury, and bids us equip ourselves for the fight. "Stand, therefore," says the Apostle, "having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Being himself well acquainted with the efficacy of believing prayer, he feelingly adds: "And suplication for all saints, and *for me*, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

With equal force, he urges on, the Thessalonians to the spiritual combat: "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." How invincible is the believer, when thus clad. And, as the hour of dissolution advances, how unspeakably blessed, when in the triumph of Christian hope, he can exclaim: "O death where is thy sting. O grave, where is thy victory. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." May every reader experience this full assurance of hope which upheld the conquering Apostle while passing through the deepest waters, and which cheered his soul in the darkest seasons of affliction.

Too many resemble the character of Pliable so admirably drawn by Bunyan in his Pilgrim's Progress. They are delighted with the glowing descriptions which are given of heaven by the inspired writers, and long to behold the golden streets, the pearly gates, the crystal streams, the unwithering tree of life, and all the glories which compose that blissful place.

But, when they fall into the Slough of Despond, that mire of inward corruption, with which they were hitherto unacquainted; and have to struggle with doubts and fears, raised by Satan and their own unbelieving hearts; they are offended, and gladly run back again into the world, just as the dog returns to its vomit, and as the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. The true believer, on the contrary, like Christian, is bent upon advancing toward the Wicket-Gate. He

is escaping for his life from the City of Destruction, this present evil world, and therefore dares not tarry in all the plain, much less turn back to the place from whence he came. He may for a time, sink deep in desponding fears, arising from indwelling sin and obscure views of the grace and glory of Jesus, but having received a new nature, he ardently longs after the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

He cries for help, and help is vouchsafed from the Lord, whose well-timed promises, like the steps across the Slough of Despond, support his feet, till he reaches the firm ground nearest to the Shining Light, and thus evidences the reality of his conversion to God. Though much discouraged because of the way, he is still determined to persevere; and, obtaining a clearer view of the cross of Christ by the exercise of a stronger faith, every spiritual blessing is imparted to him, and he finally enters with joy into the celestial city.

The amiable and pious Leighton has forcibly described this chequered experience of the true believer, which is so compounded of joy and sorrow.

"Inward corruptions," as he truly observes, "clog and trouble the believer, and he cannot shake them off nor prevail against them, without much pains, many prayers, and tears.—And many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he hath gained ground; yea, sometimes he is foiled, and cast down by them; and so in all other duties, such a fighting and continued combat with

a revolting backsliding heart, the flesh pulling and dragging downwards. When he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with a stone tied to its foot; hath wings that flutter to be upwards, but is pressed down with the weight fastened to him. What struggling with wanderings, and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer!

"How much pain to attain any thing, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial: and if any thing be attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party. How often are the righteous driven back to their old point!

"If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried back by the stream; and what returns of doubtings and misbelief, after they thought they were got somewhat above them: insomuch, that sometimes they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never do for them. And yet, through all these, they are brought safe home. There is another strength which bears them up, and brings them through; but these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that it is not so easy to come to heaven as most imagine."

The heavenly-minded Leighton, no doubt, included himself in this experience of *the righteous*, though, Bishop Burnet has left this record of his superior sanctity: "I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him, for above two and twenty years, I never knew him speak an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any

other temper, but that in which I wished to be in the last minutes of my life."

If then, the righteous scarcely be saved: if so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties surround their path; if so many enemies are up in arms to impede their progress; and so much evil still remains from the fleshly principle within; requiring incessant watchfulness and prayer: where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Awful indeed will be the end of those, who have either rejected or neglected the grace of God, so freely offered in the Gospel of his Son.

There are, it is true, many shades of character, same darker and some fainter, but still they are shades of evil.

The Bible speaks of no middle character, no neutral state between the righteous and the wicked. We must be either believers or unbelievers, saints or sinners, the friends or the enemies of Christ. We cannot serve God and Mammon. The line of demarcation between the *true Church* and the world, is broadly and distinctly drawn in the Word of God. The blessed Jesus hath declared: "He that is not with me is against me." This important distinction was also clearly made when the gracious commission was given to Paul at the period of his conversion: "Now I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

This transforming power accompanied the preaching of the Apostle. Hence he could say to the Ephesians: "Ye were sometimes darkness,

but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light."

Also to the Thessalonians: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

But alas! how awfully descriptive of our state is the lamentation of the prophet: "Our silver is become dross, and our wine is mixed with water." We are not now, what the early Christians were, burning and shining lights. The visible Church of Christ planted in these kingdoms, has had a long season of repose. No storm of violent persecution has been permitted to assail it. We have grown up within its bosom during a period of religious liberty, unknown to former ages. From our infancy we have heard, in a greater or less degree, the glorious truths of the Gospel. They have become familiar to our ears, but they have not proportionably affected our hearts. We too easily substitute the form for the power, the notion for the spirit, of Christianity.

Without considering what is the nature, the operation, and the requirements of the Gospel, we content ourselves with the circumstance of being born in a Christian country, and belonging to a Christian church. Hence we conclude as a matter of course that we are *Christians*, and that all will be well with us at the last.

Without any breach of that charity which hopeth all things, we are compelled to declare this painful truth: that thousands who are moral, and regular in all the outward duties and decencies of religion, are still as far distant from the spirit and

practice, the principles and feelings, of the true believer, as the East is from the West.

Do any startle at this plain assertion?—Where, I would ask, is their deep contrition, their sincere repentance, their hatred of sin, their application to the Saviour, their love to his name, their delight in his service, their attachment to his people, their self-denying obedience, their renunciation of the world, their patience under suffering for the Gospel's sake? Where, in short, is the *new creature* in Christ Jesus to be seen in them? It has no existence. They have a name to live, being called Christians, and professing to believe in Jesus, but they are dead. The general truths of of the Gospel may dwell in their understandings, but they have no abiding place in their hearts. They may make them moral, but they do not transform their souls into the holy image of Christ. The Apostle has well described the character of these nominal Christians: "They profess that they know God, but in works deny him. They have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."

These are the persons who, frequenting the House of God, sneer at conscientious piety, and sarcastically pity the weakness of "the *saints*." Yet, they have full confidence in the mercy of God, and deem it most uncharitable, even to breathe a hint that they are in danger of eternal perdition. But, when death seizes upon them, when the world is found to be an idol which cannot save, and worldly friends but miserable comforters: when conscience fastens upon them as its prey, and tears their souls

with inconceivable anguish, (awful presage of the worm that never dies;) O what would they not give, for that sweet assurance of hope, that *real Christianity*, which supports and gladdens the despised believer, as he passes through the cold stream of death to his eternal rest. Unbelief blinds their minds, and hardens their hearts. While in the enjoyment of health and plenty, they can sport with thoughtless gaiety on the brink of hell. The sun of prosperity shines upon them and all around is pleasant. Then why should they forebode the death-bearing storm, or sigh in the midst of laughter? Sickness or poverty, in their estimation, is the proper time for reflection, because at such gloomy seasons, the opportunities for pleasure are gone. They may perhaps be induced to bestow a few thoughts upon serious things, but they never do it with a serious spirit. At the grave of some beloved friend, they drop the tear of affection, and for the moment feel the *vanity* of earthly things; but soon, the tide of occupation and of pleasure returns, and the faint impression is obliterated from their minds.

Like Felix, they dismiss as soon as possible the unwelcome visitor, and quiet their consciences by this message: "When I have a more convenient season I will call for thee."

But the insulted and grieved Spirit may never more vouchsafe his convictions. The awful seal of perdition may be put upon these despisers of his grace, bearing this inscription: "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone."

What thousands are deceived, through the

subtlety of Satan to their eternal ruin. They intend to repent, and are resolved to be godly. They resolve, and re-resolve, and die the same. Blest with a profusion of worldly good, which a bounteous Providence has heaped upon them, what multitudes of professing Christians, are thus unmindful of the Giver of their mercies, forgetful of their responsibilities, neglectful of their souls, yea more, rejecters of Him who died to save them, who is even now waiting to be gracious, who calls to them by his ministers, who invites them by his Word, who strives with them by his Spirit.

Should any one cast his eyes upon these humble pages, whose conscience bears testimony to the truth of these reflections, I pray that the Divine Spirit of all grace, may bless the faithful admonition to his heart. O that these solemn truths may be received in the same spirit of love in which they were written; for as "the ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise:"—so—"he that hateth rèproof shall die." Whatever human reason may suggest as the way to heaven, the Bible plainly declares, that, there is no salvation for sinners but through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ; and no other way of coming to Christ, as a Saviour, but by believing on him: that, faith is the gift of God, the work of his Spirit in our hearts: and that, for this inestimable blessing, we must pray without ceasing.

To encourage us to the performance of this duty, with what inimitable tenderness has Jesus appealed to our hearts: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how

much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him."

Can we remain insensible to this inconceivable loving-kindness of our God and Saviour?

God is love, and has manifested his love towards us, by sending his only-begotten Son into world, that we might live through him.

God is love, and hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked. How importunate are his calls of mercy: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be? O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified."

May this exhibition of redeeming love soften our hearts, and lead us to the mercy-seat where God waiteth to be gracious. There, with an earnestness of desire, and deep feeling of our need, let us ask, that we may receive: seek, that we may find, and knock that the door of mercy may be opened. "For this," says St. John, "is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

"Why should earthly beauties tear me
From the fountain of all bliss,
From that Lord, who waits to bear me
To a happier land than this?

" Faith already seems beginning
To approach that land of rest,
Where I shall have done with sinning
And with endless peace be blest.

" Hasting to those heav'nly treasures,
Meaner joys I leave behind;
Earth with all its boasted pleasures,
Shall not move my stedfast mind."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ST. PAUL'S SOURCES OF CONSOLATION.—THE COVENANT TITLES OF JEHOVAH.—THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE DIVINE COUNSEL.—THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SAVIOUR'S GRACE.—THE EFFICACY OF HIS POWER.—THE ASSURANCE OF FUTURE GLORY.

NOTHING can be more interesting to a Christian, whose heart is filled with holy love, than the contemplation of the divine perfections as displayed in our redemption by Jesus Christ; and, of that work of grace which is wrought in the heart of the sinner through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Well might David strike his harp with joyful notes: "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God, while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord." Every other subject is light and trifling compared with this; for however wonderful are the works of God, He, who made them, must infinitely surpass them all in glory. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." But,

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."

What can be more ennobling to the soul of man, than spiritual meditations on that Infinite Being who made, redeemed, and sanctified us; whose watchful care ever protects us, and whose love is engaged to preserve and bless us.

O! how delightful is the thought, that he who inhabiteth eternity, who clotheth himself with light as with a garment, who rideth upon the wings of the wind, before whom all nations are less than nothing and vanity, who beholdeth, *at one glance*, all things past, present, and to come, is our FATHER and our FRIEND.

What can harm us, while sheltered under his wing? What can grieve us, while dwelling beneath his smile?

He, who ruleth over all worlds, has promised to make all things work together for good to them that love him. If *we* love God, he will make good this sweet promise even unto us.

How secure, how peaceful, how blessed, is the true believer in Jesus. His heart can joyfully respond to these soul-reviving questions of the Apostle: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—Shall tribulation or distress,

or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

O glorious triumph of faith. What can exceed the blessedness arising from a firm hold on the promises of God in Christ? All earthly supports shall finally forsake us, but the Word of Christ will never fail. He has himself given us this blessed assurance: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Must it not then be dishonouring to Jesus, for one moment to doubt his Word, which is firm as the everlasting pillars which support his throne.

Earth would once more resemble Paradise, did the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ produce its full effect on every heart. The religion of Jesus is a religion of love; and love worketh no ill to his neighbour. It is a religion of peace, and peace would convert spears into ploughshares. It is a religion of purity, and purity would banish every unclean passion from the earth.

To extend the blessings of this heavenly religion was the heart's desire of St. Paul; to make known its riches was his delight, though his efforts were too often repaid by ingratitude, and attended with unnumbered sufferings.

Earth will not always groan under the weight of sin, as now alas it does!

The page of prophecy unfolds an age of brightness to our view, when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channels of the sea; when the

wolf and the lamb shall feed together; and when they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. Then truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Violence shall no more he heard in our land; neither wasting nor destruction within our borders; for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. His people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, that he may be glorified.

Blessed Jesus! why are thy chariot wheels so long in coming? Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices. Thou hast said: "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

How truly wonderful is the Spirit's operation in the heart of the believer. The more we meditate upon it as exhibited in the character and experience of the great Apostle, the more we shall admire the wisdom, power, and love, which shone forth in his conversion and establishment in the faith. His whole experience is profitable to us. We behold successively his conflicts, his comforts, and his conquests.

Perhaps no man ever suffered more in the cause of Christ, enjoyed more abundant consolations, or obtained more glorious victories over the powers of darkness.

We have already seen an ample detail of his trials, as recorded by himself; trials which would

have daunted the most courageous, unaided by strength from above.

With beautiful humility, so characteristic of his mind, he says to the Corinthians: "Jesus was seen of me, as of one born out of due time; for I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me." So careful was this holy man to place the crown of glory upon the head of Jesus, whose power and love had been magnified in his conversion to the faith which once he destroyed.

The consideration of those sources of consolation, from whence he derived so much joy, and which sustained him under the vicissitudes of his eventful life, will afford another proof of the blessedness of faith in Christ. During his abode at Corinth and Jerusalem, and while traversing the ocean on his voyage to Rome, this faithful servant of Christ was favoured with encouraging visions. "I am with thee," were words of unspeakable comfort, when spoken in the hour of trial by the Saviour whom he loved. The titles which are given to the Almighty, in his Epistles to the different churches, contain within them the sweetest consolation.

When exhorting the Christians at Corinth, he says: "Finally, brethren farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the *God of love and peace* shall be with you."

To the Romans he writes: "Now the *God of patience and consolation* grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The *God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

In the fulness of his heart, he breaks forth into a song of praise: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father of mercies*, and the *God of all comfort*, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God; for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

How endearing is the view here afforded us of our Almighty Creator; how blessed is the assurance of his good-will toward us through Christ Jesus.

It is peculiarly affecting to the heart of every contrite believer to be thus privileged to call upon his God as,—the God of love and peace,—the God of patience and consolation,—the God of hope,—the Father of mercies,—and the God of all comfort.

O that we could feel the overflowings of gratitude for such super-abundant grace.

Nothing more awfully manifests the hardness of the heart, than insensibility to the loving-kindness of God, whose tender mercies are over all his

works, and whose very chastisements are blessings in disguise.

The heart of St. Paul was deeply impressed by a view of the Divine Goodness. This made him exclaim: "O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." To the wicked, he put this awakening question: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering: not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" To the righteous, he used this affectionate entreaty: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

This view and these feelings of a Saviour's love, enabled him to console the suffering saints. He could speak from sweet experience both of mercy and judgment.

To the Christians at Corinth, the comforted Apostle thus unfolded the divine dealings: "Whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation: and our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye also be of the consolation."

Blessed indeed is that shepherd, who can thus strengthen the faith, and encourage the hope of his flock, by revealing to them the sources of his own consolation, and by leading them into the

green pastures, and beside the still waters of the Gospel of Christ.

It is the will of God, that in every thing we should give thanks; that we should glory in tribulation; and count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of our faith worketh patience.

But alas! we live very much below our duty and our privileges. We love ease and an exemption from trial; we shrink from suffering, and cannot bear the weight and shame of the cross. And why are we thus? Because the world has struck its roots into our hearts, which, like the deadly cancer, is consuming the vital principle.

The deeply-tried Apostle had to weep over one, whom he once reckoned among the saints:—"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." Jesus also gave this solemn warning: "Remember Lot's wife."

May the all-gracious Spirit revive his work, as in the days of old, lest our end should resemble that of the seven churches, to whom St. John delivered the Saviour's rebuke, and from whom the light of evangelical truth has long been removed.

The foundation of all that spiritual joy which animated the breast of St. Paul, was *the immutability of the Divine Counsel.* God's faithfulness was his best security.—He knew whom he had believed, and through grace, enjoyed the full assurance of hope. This blessed truth, the Apostle admirably unfolded to the Hebrew converts to

promote their stability in the faith:—"God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Our finite capacities cannot comprehend the fulness of grace which is contained in these sublime words; for, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

We must die, to know the vast extent of redeeming love. Here, we can only see as through a glass darkly, but in heaven we shall have a full view of that covenant of peace, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

How wonderful is the divine condescension. Surely a simple promise from the lip of Eternal Truth ought to fill our hearts with joy. But so slow of heart are we to believe all that the Lord hath spoken, and so weak is our faith in seasons of darkness, that God, willing *more abundantly*, to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. Thus, when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by Himself, saying: "Surely blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee." And so,

after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Can we then doubt after such a confirmation as this? Is not Jehovah in all ages the same covenant-keeping God? Are not his promises lasting as the days of heaven? Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? O! the desperate vileness of our ungrateful unbelieving hearts! With tears may each say, with the father of the poor afflicted child: "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief," and with our Christian Poet:

"Why should I shrink at thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears?
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

"Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor blind creature of a day,
And crush'd before the moth.

"But ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still bind me to thy sway;
Else the next cloud that veils my skies,
Drives all these thoughts away."

We resemble mariners, navigating a tempestuous ocean, the waves of trouble are ever rolling around us; deep calleth unto deep; while the tempest-tossed believer, like Peter, is compelled to cry out: "Lord save, or I perish;" and with David: "All thy waves and billows are gone over me."

But in the midst of this tossing, how con-

soling is the assurance, that in Christ Jesus, the soul is as safe as if it were crossing a sea without a wave. While the worldling is driven by fierce winds hither and thither, and is at length ingulphed in the mighty waters: the true believer, secured by the ANCHOR OF HOPE, is firmly moored to the ROCK OF AGES.

Can we then be surprised that the delighted Apostle, thus preserved by the strength and faithfulness of his Saviour, should feel exceeding joyful in all his tribulation? Blessed indeed was his CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. None can understand it aright, none can feel it fully, but those happy souls in whom Jesus takes up his abode, and manifests himself as he does not unto the world.

Reader, canst thou participate in this Gospel blessing? Hast thou cast anchor within the veil?

The knowledge of ourselves is a most difficult science, owing to the vanity of our minds, and the influence of self-love. We are blind to our own faults, but quick-sighted to the failings of others. The mote in our brother's eye, is readily discerned; while we are unconscious of the beam so apparent in our own.

Humility is the basis of Christian excellence. It is a grace of peculiar beauty in the sight of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and who has declared, that, "he who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Those persons, therefore, who imagine, that

they have obtained such a victory over their corruptions, as will free them from the trouble of watchfulness and circumspection, have attained unto a higher degree of sanctification, than ever the holy Paul professed to have done.

Let us learn humility and self-knowledge by the experience of this eminent servant of Christ.

We have a beautiful instance of this Christian state of mind, recorded by himself in his Second Epistle to the Church at Corinth: "I knew a man in Christ," writes the Apostle, "whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth: such an one was caught up to the third heaven, into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

St. Paul was *this man*, although with admirable humility he endeavoured to cast a veil over himself. He could have revealed a scene of wonders, which would have raised him still higher in the estimation of the churches; but, says he, "I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."

Could any spark of pride or vain-glory exist in such a lowly bosom? Could he, who as a sinner, declared himself to be *the Chief*, and as a saint, *less than the least*, be in danger of the swellings of high-mindedness?

Let us hear what he says of himself: "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the Revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to

buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

Surely no one, after such a confession, will dare to say: I have made my heart clean. I am pure from my sin. I am removed from the fear of evil.

Was it needful for the humble, self-denying Paul, to have a thorn in the flesh, to keep him in the valley of humiliation, and to remind him that he was still *in the body*, and therefore subject to temptation: then where is the Christian, who has reached to such a height of perfection, as to be wholly removed from the buffettings of Satan, and the lustings of the flesh?

"For this thing," said the Apostle, "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." This dispensation, whatever might be its nature, was distressing to him. It was a *thorn*. He felt its painfulness, and prayed earnestly for its removal.

Was he left without a word of comfort under this unexpected trial? Oh! how compassionate is Jesus to his suffering servants. With infinite loving-kindness, he opened to him this source of consolation: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

So contented was the happy saint with this Divine answer to his prayer, that although the thorn was not removed, yet the assurance of receiving a sufficiency of grace in every time of need, enabled him to say with feelings of exultation: "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest

upon me; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

What can any suffering or tempted believer want more, for strength and comfort, than the all-sufficient grace of his Saviour? Having this, he has every thing; wanting this, he is poor indeed.

Delightful promise! "My grace is sufficient for thee." Jesus gives strength equal to our day. However dark the dispensation, or difficult the the path; whether we be in the sun-shine of prosperity, or amid the storms of adversity,—in the activities of life, or on the bed of death, the promise is never failing: "My grace is sufficient for thee."

May every reader enjoy in all its fulness this source of consolation, so highly valued by the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

While labouring with all cheerfulness in the vineyard of his Lord, St. Paul had to endure many privations. We have seen how he suffered in the course of his ministry, both hunger, and cold, and nakedness. Yet none of these things moved him. He was willing to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

When the Gentile churches manifested their affection toward him, by ministering to his necessities, he received the expression of their love with thankfulness. This grateful feeling he strikingly exhibited in his Epistle to the Philippians: "I

rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last, your care of me flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only; for even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessities; not that I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well-pleasing unto God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Such was the Christian spirit which displayed itself in the conduct of this holy man under every trying circumstance of life. Humility, patience, faith, and love shone brightly in him at all times; and more especially when under the pressure of affliction. No repining ever escaped his lips; for his heart cheerfully acquiesced in all the will of God, and suffering was converted into pleasure, when endured for the Gospel's sake. If he spoke of his necessities, it was not with the view of *compelling* the churches to relieve them. His soul abhorred so mercenary a motive. He therefore says to the Philippians: "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.

Every where and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

What an antidote is divine contentment to the ills of life. This rare attainment can only be made in the school of Christ. Happy indeed is the man, who under every changing scene, in humble dependance upon a Saviour's grace, has learned to be content.

It was not human power nor human reasoning which thus enabled the Apostle to support with lightsome heart the burden of the cross. Faith in the power of Christ was the great secret of his consolation: "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Have we attained to this happy state in our Christian experience? Can we say in sincerity and truth: I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content?

Few, as Bunyan expresses it, descend into the Valley of Humiliation without a slip or two. However much we may trust to the strength of our principles, we shall always find, by experience, that it is easier to talk about resignation than to be resigned.

St. Paul could say: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. I am *instructed* both to abound and to suffer need." Blessed instruction! invaluable knowledge! which thus enabled him to bear prosperity and adversity with a Christian spirit. Those who know themselves the best, know how difficult it is, because of

the pride and earthliness of their hearts, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content.

The Spirit of Christ alone can teach us the art of divine contentment. If He instruct us, we shall be able to learn the hardest lesson. Let us then sit daily at the feet of Jesus, where, imbibing his Spirit, and receiving his grace, we shall rise superior to every trial, and be enabled to unite with St. Paul in his assurance of faith: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The prospect of death, so terrible to many, was to the Apostle a scene of brightest expectation. The man who could say: "I die daily: I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ: being willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord:"—must have rejoiced at every approach towards the consummation of his wishes. When death knocks at the door and shakes his dart, the sinner trembles for fear. So did not Paul. While his outward man was daily tending to decay, his inward man was advancing toward perfection. He could triumph over death in its most frightful form, and find, in the worldling's terror, a source of the highest consolation. The opening grave, with its accompanying gloom, may sadden a heart wrapt up in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, but all its sable horrors vanished before the bright assurance of the Apostle: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep

that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Faith is the eye which pierces the clouds, and fixes itself upon the hidden glories of Emmanuel's kingdom. This faith, ever in vigorous exercise, upheld the great Apostle, and like the pillar of fire in the wilderness, shed a brightness over all his path. Possessing this gift of grace, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, he felt his affliction to be light, and its duration momentary. With stedfast faith, he looked, not at the things which are seen and are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal: he therefore gradually advanced in a meetness for heaven, and gloried in those tribulations, which, through the Spirit, wrought out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

What a blessed gradation there is in the scale of mercy: "For affliction there is glory. For light affliction a weight of glory. For light affliction which is but for a moment, an eternal weight of glory." Here then we perceive another source of the Apostle's consolation, for the joy of the believer, passing the boundary of time, reaches into eternity.

Like a true pilgrim, this apostolic missionary had no certain dwelling-place. He renounced those treasures which engross the worldling's mind, for a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He gave up all, to possess all—He became poor, that he might be rich. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being

burdened," was his experience. "We look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," was his earnest expectation, and his hope. How different is the state of unconverted men. They hug their chain, though they sigh under its weight; they cherish the viper, though it may sting them to death. True happiness cannot possibly be found in any of those earthly things which so much occupy the time, and captivate the hearts of dying mortals.

Pleasures may fascinate, riches may dazzle, honours may inflate; but what can these sources of *ideal* comfort yield in the hour of death and judgment?

Miserable comforters are they all at such a season of *real* anguish.

The Gospel, through the power of the Holy Ghost, can impart genuine happiness. A heart, wholly given to God through faith in a crucified Saviour, is the truly happy heart. If there be a pleasure in this lower world, which can communicate a sweet without a sting, it is the pleasure of communion with God through Christ. If at God's right hand, there are pleasures for evermore; if in his presence, there is fulness of joy: then every approach to Him must be made an approach to happiness, and communion with Him, must be the foretaste of eternal bliss.

This world, as Hooker has feelingly expressed it, "is made up of perturbations." The curse has made the cross: Had man never sinned, he would never have suffered. No thorns nor thistles

would have sprung up beneath his feet. Now, they cover the earth, as perpetual emblems of man's misery, and of God's displeasure.

In every thorn or thistle, we may read the fall of man. Through Christ, the promised seed of the woman, the curse is now removed from every believing sinner: and though the *cross remains*, yet its bitterness is extracted, and it is made to yield the wholesome fruit of patience, self-denial, and deadness to the world.

The covenant love of God sweetens every cup of suffering, and lightens every burden of affliction. Hence, the way, though thorny, is rendered pleasant; and trials, though sharp, are gloried in, for Jesus' sake.

Who then is the truly happy person, in this world of sin and sorrow? It is the genuine believer in Jesus; he, whose faith is not speculative, but practical; whose love is not transient, but abiding; whose hope is placed, not upon created things, but on Christ the sure foundation.

From Jesus, he receives pardon and peace, righteousness and strength, grace and glory. Streams of mercy are ever flowing around him. He sees LOVE inscribed on every dispensation; and, like the martyr, can kiss the faggot prepared to consume him, crying: Welcome Cross—Welcome Cross.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles, was honoured of God to proclaim this blessedness to the world.

Being taught by the Spirit to know the Truth, and to feel its power, he saw with unclouded vision

the glories of the Gospel, and daily lived under the consoling influence of its heavenly light.

To the Corinthian church, he poured forth his stores of Gospel tidings: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

With such divine supports, such sources of consolation, St. Paul was enabled to encounter the fiercest opposition; and at midnight, to sing praises to his God in the dungeon at Philippi. Have we attained to this height of blessedness? Can we extract sweetness from the bitterness of death,—and consolation from the worldling's source of sorrow?

While meditating upon these riches of sovereign grace, these abundant consolations provided for suffering saints, let us strike our harps with David and sing: "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them. If I should count them they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be

abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light, we shall see light."

"When the world my heart is rending
With its heaviest storm of care,
My glad thoughts, to God ascending,
Find a refuge from despair.

"There's a hand of mercy near me,
Though the waves of trouble roar;
There's an hour of rest to cheer me,
When the toils of life are o'er.

"Happy hour! when saints are gaining,
That bright crown they long'd to wear;
Not one spot of sin remaining,
Not one pang of earthly care.

"O! to rest in peace for ever,
Join'd with happy souls above;
Where no foe my heart can sever
From the Saviour whom I love.

"This the hope that shall sustain me
Till life's pilgrimage be past;
Fears may vex, and troubles pain me,
I shall reach my home at last."

CHAPTER XIX.

ST. PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY. —ON SELF-EXAMINATION.

THE doctrine of the Cross shines with peculiar lustre in the writings of St. Paul.

Its sublimity far surpasses the conception of the strongest intellect, while through its simplicity, the most unlettered peasant is made wise unto salvation.

Love to God, producing love to man, is the blessed fruit of faith in a crucified Redeemer.

Nothing can equal the master-strokes of the great Apostle in his portraiture of Christian love. They discover a mind enlightened from above—a heart clothed with humility. While charmed with the beauty of the picture, we must feel abased at our own little resemblance to it. O! that our whole soul may be moulded into this heavenly grace. Spiritual gifts, so highly valued by the primitive churches, were as nothing in the estimation of this eminent saint, if unaccompanied by love.

With what peculiar force does he express this

feeling to the Corinthian Christians: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing: And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

How all-pervading in the Christian system, is love. As the sap, which circulates unseen, causes the fertility of the tree: so is this hidden principle the cause of fruitfulness in the believer. Earth would resemble heaven, were all who call themselves Christians, the living exemplars of this lovely grace. But alas! how widely different from celestial love, is the prevailing spirit of the Christian world. The spiritual foe is fearfully at work. Union in the camp of Satan, and disunion in the Church of God is most portentous of approaching evil. The enemies of Christ are making one common cause against His Truth,—while his professing people are suffering jealousies and mistrusts to separate them from each other. Oh! that a spirit of love may be speedily poured out upon all our churches, lest the Holy Dove should flee away from these scenes of strife, and leave us to the miseries of a fallen people.

Let us contemplate the features of Christian charity as drawn by the masterly hand of the Apostle, and then look at those of our fallen na-

ture,—and though painful be the contrast, may it lead us in self-abasement to the Cross of Christ, where love is displayed in its divinest form.

Charity suffereth long and is kind.—We are quick in our resentments, slow in our reconciliations, and backward to repay an injury with kindness.

Charity envieth not.—We look with envious eye on the possessions and preferments of others; and cannot bear to be outshone by the superior talents of our neighbour. The Scripture saith not in vain, "the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy; and where envy is, there is confusion and every evil work."

Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.—We are naturally vain and self-sufficient, proud of our gifts, and wise in our own conceits.

Charity doth not behave itself unseemly.—We transgress the bounds of decency and propriety; and fail in that reverence which is due to our superiors.

Charity seeketh not her own.—We are selfish, regarding our own interest and pleasure: caring not who sinks, if only we swim.

Charity is not easily provoked.—We take fire at the least offence; making a man an offender for a word; suffering anger to rest in our bosoms; and letting the sun go down upon our wrath.

Charity thinketh no evil.—We readily indulge in evil surmisings, and unfounded censures; sitting in judgment on the motives of others, and condemning those as hypocrites whom the Lord doth not condemn.

Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.—We take a secret delight in the falls of those whom we dislike; and find a pleasure in hearing and propagating the tale of slander.

Charity beareth all things.—We do not bear unkind treatment with meekness, nor cover the defects of others with the veil of love.

Charity believeth all things.—We are unwilling to put the best construction on our neighbour's actions, and to give him credit for his good intentions.

Charity hopeth all things.—We seldom anticipate good from the conduct of those, against whom we have imbibed a prejudice.

Charity endureth all things.—We cannot endure with patience undeserved reproach; nor be willing, at all times to suffer, rather than to inflict an injury.

Thus we are by nature, the very reverse of this holy Charity; for having, through the fall of our first parents, lost the image of God who is LOVE, we bear the image of Satan, who is the author of envy, malignity, and pride.

"Whoever has watched the sun in his declining course, and has seen him sink into the horizon, must sometimes have observed dark clouds gathering round him, as if to blot out and extinguish his rays: but instead of effecting this, the sun throws on them the brightness of his own pure light, and reflects upon the dark face of the hostile clouds, the radiant colours of his own splendour. They glow with borrowed hues of glory.

"This will be the effect of Christian Charity

also. If any assail us with dark suspicions, doubts, and fears, let us spread over them the light of Christian love: let our example be as pure as the object is holy: thus shall we tinge them with better colours: they will catch the same glow, and be excited to better purposes."

Divinely glorious is that principle, which can effect such happiness. In the midst of manifold changes and dissolutions—Charity never faileth.—Prophecies shall be fulfilled—Tongues shall cease—Knowledge, like the scaffolding, shall be removed—Faith shall be lost in vision—Hope, in enjoyment—but Love shall never fail.—This grace will flourish with immortal vigour in the Paradise above; for ever expanding its beauties, and filling the redeemed with eternal joy, the nearer it approaches the uncreated Fountain of Light and Love.

If the first duty of the Christian be Charity, without which all our doings are nothing worth; if faith, working by love, be the only saving faith: how important is St. Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church, and to all the churches of Christ in every succeeding age: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

With much humility, sincerity, and prayer, we should enter into our own bosoms, and there, search the secret recesses of our hearts, to detect each lurking evil, and to know the worst of ourselves. This self-knowledge, though a difficult, is an indispensable attainment. No labour should

be deemed too great, no discovery too humiliating in the prosecution of this inward search. May the Divine Spirit teach us by his illuminating influence. We are naturally blind to our real state and character,—but God fully knows the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our heart.

The following considerations are submitted to the pious reader, in the humble hope, that they may, in some measure, conduce to this desirable end, through the blessing of Him from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed.

ON THE NATURE OF GOD.

When I meditate upon the greatness and glory of God, on his infinite and adorable perfections, what effect has this knowledge upon my heart? Do I reverence this Holy Lord God? Do I love him above all created beings? Am I anxious to please, and fearful to offend him? Does a sense of his Omniscience restrain me from secret sin? Does a conviction of his Omnipotence inspire me with confidence in the hour of danger? Does a firm persuasion of his Omnipresence encourage me to bear up under outward trials, and to press forward on the way to glory.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

When I reflect upon the introduction of moral evil into the world, and all its dire calamities,

temporal, spiritual, and eternal; what are my feelings on this mysterious subject? Do I receive this truth in the simplicity of faith, not desiring to be wise above what is written? Feeling the effects of sin, by painful experience, am I desirous to obtain the remedy which a gracious God has provided in the Gospel of his Son? Am I more anxious to extinguish the destructive fire, than curious to know how it was first kindled? Does a consciousness of sin, humble me before God, and empty my soul of all hope of self-justification in his sight? Can I rest satisfied with the Divine Revelation, that, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned?"

ON THE FALL OF MAN.

When I think upon man's apostacy from God; the total corruption of my heart; the hardening, polluting, and blinding nature of sin: what is the influence of these momentous truths? Do they lay me in the dust before God, and cause me to cry out—Unclean—unclean,—Wo is me, I am undone, —Behold I am vile? Have they made me to despair of salvation by any righteousness of my own; and filled me with shame in the presence of Infinite Purity? With self-abhorrence do I cast myself on the unmerited mercy of God in Christ, daily praying with the broken-hearted Publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner?"

ON SALVATION BY JESUS CHRIST.

When I survey the freeness and fulness of divine grace, the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ's salvation, the efficacy of his blood, the value of his righteousness, the prevalency of his intercession, and the sweet and precious promise of eternal life through him : how am I affected by these glorious truths? Do I feel a spring of delight rising up within me, at the sound of these glad tidings of great joy? Have I felt my need of this grace? And in humble penitence and faith, have I come to Christ as my only Saviour, to be redeemed from present sin and future misery?

Renouncing all self-dependence, and casting myself upon Christ for righteousness and strength, have I experienced a change of heart, and found sin to be exceeding sinful? Does my soul sink deeper in humility, while beholding my just desert in the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion of my compassionate Redeemer? Does gratitude continually ascend, like holy incense from my heart, when reviewing the Saviour's dying love? Is my benevolence toward man more enlarged, and my obedience to God rendered more lively and sincere, from these precious views of the grace of Christ?

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

When I view the work of the Spirit, his mighty energy in opening the blind eyes to see the

glory of Jesus; in unstopping the deaf ears to receive the sweet sounds of salvation through him; in making the tongue of the dumb to sing his praise, and the feet of the lame to run in the paths of willing obedience: When I dwell upon his powerful operations in breaking the chain of sin, destroying the strong-holds of Satan, convincing the rebel of his ingratitude, inclining him to accept the offered mercy, and to become the willing subject of the Prince of peace: what effect have these all-important truths upon my heart?

In this rebel, do I behold *myself?* With full conviction of my depravity, do I earnestly seek, through Christ, for the aid of the Holy Spirit? Have I hitherto experienced any thing of this mighty change, this growing renovation of heart? Is sin less powerful in my soul? Do I feel its force decreasing, and the power of grace, the love of holiness, acquiring strength?

Through the influence of the Spirit, can I renounce the vain and empty pleasures of the world, its carnal company, its sinful ways? Have I resigned my *all* to God, desiring that his Will should rule, and his Spirit guide, my every thought and action?

Are all my hopes of heavenly glory derived from, and resting upon Jesus, as my Prophet, Priest, and King?

Has the Divine Spirit made me willing to kiss the sceptre of his grace, and to take my station beneath the banner of the cross? Through his Almighty strength am I become a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ? Do I now wage war against the

world, the flesh, and the devil, with whom I was once in league against the Majesty of Heaven?

Conscious of my utter inability to withstand these foes without the power of Christ, am I continually going to the Strong for strength, and thus living in humble dependance on his grace, do I come off more than conqueror, through Him who loved me and gave himself for me?

ON PERSONAL HOLINESS.

When I consider the dangers which surround me, and the sin which still dwelleth within me: do I pray for grace, to keep my heart in all diligence, to walk along the slippery path of life with circumspection, and to cultivate a spirit of humility and godly fear?

Am I kind to those who treat me with contempt, because I profess myself an unworthy follower of a crucified Redeemer? Have I indulged any murmuring thoughts at my present condition, or envied the possessions, or attainments of those, whose superior wealth or knowledge cast me into the shade? Am I willing to be nothing in the sight of men, if so be I may, through Christ, be admitted into favour with God? Is this the language of my heart:

> "Make me little and unknown,
> Lov'd and priz'd by God alone."

Is it my daily prayer and study to recommend the Gospel by gentleness, kindness, and courtesy; thus silencing those who would accuse the religion

of Jesus as tending to foster uncharitable feelings, moroseness of spirit, disagreeableness of manners, and discord in domestic life?

When little provocations occur, which, in some shape or other will perpetually happen, through the perverseness of those with whom we dwell: is my temper easily ruffled?—or, can I maintain a spirit of self-possession, when tempted to anger by more serious causes, being wishful to reprove in love, rather than in a spirit of bitterness?

Have I any pleasure in hearing or speaking ill of others; or do I cast a veil of charity over their failings, being willing at all times, when an action will admit of *two* constructions, to hope the best?

Is it a grief when evil thoughts arise in my mind; and are they at such times my burden and cross? Do I pray and strive through the Spirit to subdue them? Do I fly to the blood of Jesus to be cleansed from every pollution of sin?

Am I distressed when I hear of abounding wickedness? Is my soul pained within me, when I behold the falls of professors, the backslidings of God's children, and the reproach which they bring upon the Gospel of Christ?

Have I a holy joy when sinners are converted, when the cause of Truth is triumphing, and when the Gospel is extending its influence throughout the earth?

ON RELATIVE DUTIES.

When I learn from Scripture the necessity of

good works,—that holiness is an essential part of Christ's salvation,—that to be really holy, is to be relatively holy: when I meditate on the duties of man to man, on brotherly affection, and on all the charities of social life:—

When I dwell upon those obligations which are laid upon me as a Christian, to fulfil the law of love; and contemplate the happiness, connected with a strict obedience to the precepts of the Gospel, the blessedness arising from a kind endeavour to make others happy, and the felicity, flowing from a consciousness of desire to promote by prayer, by influence, by precept, and example, the salvation of my fellow sinners:—

When I read in my Bible, the reciprocal duties of rulers and subjects, of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of ministers and people: what effect have these important duties on my life and conversation? Am I walking with steady step in this path of holy obedience; aiming, in a spirit of love, to fulfil the duties of my station; seeking to attain to higher, and still higher degrees of holiness; and devising plans of usefulness, which may promote the temporal and eternal interests of mankind?

These questions, put honestly to the conscience, may lead us, through the light of the Spirit, to form some judgment of our state before God.

The difficulty of ascertaining our true character, arises from the blinding influence of self-love. We have, naturally, a fond conceit of our own

excellence, and cannot believe that our hearts are so bad as the Bible declares them to be. We can *speak* humbly enough of ourselves, even when pride is whispering that we are better than thousands around us; but we cannot bear to *hear* our conduct condemned by others. Nothing is more common, and yet nothing more dangerous, than self-deception. The faithful Apostle gave this caution to the Corinthian church: "Let no man deceive himself."

How dreadful, when the soul is first awakened from its delusion in the place of torment. This tremendous circumstance is not ideal. Jesus said to his disciples: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then, will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The foolish virgins, with their exhausted lamps and empty vessels said: "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the door was shut; and being once closed, was closed for ever! These virgins justly called *foolish*, were self-deceivers. They represent, by parable, thousands of nominal Christians, who rest contented with the light of outward profession, without examining whether they possess the grace of the Spirit in their hearts. These persons, having a name that they live, build upon a vague hope

of mercy, while utter strangers to the sanctifying influence of the Gospel, and thus perish in their sins.

The religion of Jesus reveals the remedy for all these evils. Grace, abounding to the chief of sinners, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, was the theme which kindled into a flame all the energies of St. Paul; and if, like him, we are taught of God to know the truth, and to feel its power, it will kindle ours.

What joy springs up in the soul of a sinner, when Jesus is preached in all the fulness of his salvation, and received in the simplicity of faith. Christ crucified is the magnet which draws away the heart from earthly things, and fixes it on things above. To feel the holy influence of this mystery of love, is to feel our heaven begun.

Sovereign grace is the source of holiness; for what is grace, but the favour of God, whereby he freely imparts to perishing sinners, every spiritual blessing, through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. In Christ, he is the Father of mercies.

Out of Christ, we are ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved. In Christ, we are enlightened, accepted of God, purified, and redeemed.

Out of Christ, we are hastening fast to hell. In Christ, we are journeying toward the bliss of heaven.

Out of Christ, eternity is full of torment. In Christ it is filled with unspeakable joy.

Oh! that every dying sinner would reflect on

these things, ere it be too late. Many, during the joyous season of health and plenty, treat subjects such as these with a scornful smile. But their summer-days will not last for ever. The wintry season of affliction will quickly come, when blooming health must be exchanged for pallid sickness, and splendid opulence for a noisome grave.

The rich worldling died;—and oh! how altered his condition! His remains were drawn to the tomb with all the pomp of a funereal procession; but his soul was hurried to the place of torment.

The wretched Lazarus died;—poor but pious. No escutcheoned hearse conveyed his body to the grave,—but waiting angels carried his spirit to the joys above.

Each left the world as he came into it;—bringing nothing in, he carried nothing out.—The beggar left his rags, the rich man his estates behind him.—Rank and wealth, though ordained of God for useful ends, are but temporal distinctions. They cease at the hour of dissolution.—Riches cannot arrest the stroke of death, nor procure for their possessor a passport to heaven. Poverty cannot sharpen its sting, nor subtract *one joy* from the poorest saint's eternal happiness. One moment in heaven will convince the believer, that his afflictions upon earth were light:—One moment in hell will convince the pleasure-loving sinner, that it would have been good for him, if he had never been born. Ah, who can grasp the thought of never-ending joy, or everlasting wo! The mind

labours to conceive, and yet can never reach beyond the first impression of eternity. Numbers, years, ages, all, all are lost, in the immeasurable, unfathomable abyss!

The riches of grace are the only durable riches, without which the mightiest monarchs of the earth are poor.—When earth with all its glories shall have passed away, the lowly followers of Jesus will abide for ever, and shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

How difficult it is to get heart-affecting views of sin, of Christ, of hell, and of heaven. We talk about them, but alas! how little are we practically affected by them. But what is knowledge without practice?—or feeling, without conversion of the heart to God? Nothing but the Spirit of Christ can open our eyes to see the deformity of sin—the preciousness of the Saviour—the misery of hell—the bliss of heaven.—

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God my conscience make;
Awake my soul, when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.

"O may the least omission pain,
My well-instructed soul;
And drive me to the blood again
Which makes the wounded whole."

If every motion of the soul, which does not spring from faith and love in the Saviour, be *sin*, then, what innumerable sins crowd into the space of every fleeting hour! What an immense amount at the close of a long life! This view is indeed

overwhelming. Oh! that it may at once humble us, and lead us to the bleeding Lamb, whose blood can wash away this immensity of guilt, and whose love can cast these mountains into the depths of the sea.

Who can adequately conceive of hell, and all its endless horrors;—of heaven, and all its eternal glories. We are now standing on the brink of death. Before us, lies an everlasting world. Soon we must enter into it. But *how* shall we enter it? As we die, so shall we appear at the throne of God. We *may* die this very day. What then is our present state? Are we prepared by deep repentance, humble faith, and holy love, to meet our God? Oh! let us not suffer one fleeting hour to escape, till the important enquiry be solemnly made; and an answer of peace be graciously obtained. Let us now go to Jesus,—bow lowly at his feet,—place ourselves beneath the droppings of his blood,—cast our eyes upon him in faith, and fix them there, till he remove us to that blissful place where we shall for ever dwell beneath his smiles, and grieve him by our sins no more.

CHAPTER XX.

ON GOSPEL SANCTIFICATION AS STATED BY ST. PAUL IN HIS EPISTLES.

LIKE a master-builder St. Paul laid the true foundation—Jesus Christ; and built thereon a sacred edifice of heavenly graces, more valuable than gold, and silver, and precious stones.

Those who study the nature of the Gospel, and live under its power, both know, and can enter into its blessed design.

All its doctrines, precepts, and promises, are calculated to abase the pride of man, to exalt the glory of Christ, to reveal the malignity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of the world, the bliss of heaven; to show the sinner his utter helplessness, and to reveal to him an all-sufficient Saviour, for proud man must be humbled, the idol self must be dethroned.

Hence, we find that human merit is altogether excluded from the system of St. Paul's theology. Being illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he preached the truth without any mixture of error. There are no disproportions, no disfiguring features in his

portraiture of Eternal Truth. Perfection in all its parts bespeaks its Divine original.

With uncompromising firmness he declares, that faith is the gift of God; that we are justified by faith; that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith; that we walk by faith; that we are the children of God by faith.

It was therefore to the faithful in Christ Jesus, that the Apostle wrote with such affectionate entreaty: "I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

How powerfully does he inculcate the duty of universal holiness: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

With such exhortations to holy obedience, how strange that any reflecting mind should, for

a moment, charge the doctrines of grace with having a licentious tendency. Yet, there were persons, as we have already noticed, who were base enough to abuse the grace of the Gospel. This champion for the Truth hesitated not to call them "the enemies of Christ, whose end is destruction." So carefully did he guard believers against those evils of our nature, which, when brought into contact with the Gospel, destroy its sufficiency by self-righteousness—its purity by antinomianism.

With peculiar emphasis, almost bordering on indignation, he asks these abusers of the Gospel: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And then, after showing the sanctifying nature of true faith in Christ, he gives the believer this blessed assurance: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under grace."

In all periods of the Church, Satan has sown his tares among the wheat. This state of the visible Church, is declared by our divine Saviour, in various parables of exquisite beauty.

The good and bad fishes—the wise and foolish virgins,—the fruitful and barren branches—the guests with, and the one without, a wedding garment, are all designed to illustrate this truth:—that as they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, so neither are they all true Christians, who profess to be members of Christ.

St. Paul, with his usual discrimination of

character, has given us the distinctive features of these two classes: the one, holding the Truth in unrighteousness;—the other, holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure conscience.

O! that we could enter, by sweet experience, into the Apostle's charge to the Christians at Philippi: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, *holding forth the word of life*, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, that whether I come, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

These extracts, though forming a small part of those exhortations to holiness, and cautions against sin, with which his Epistles abound, show the infinite value of the Book of God,—that storehouse of heavenly wisdom. Following its holy light, through the guidance of the Spirit, the believer is led into all truth, comforted under trials, guarded against temptations, directed to the right performance of relative duties, and taught how he ought to walk and to please God.

"The blessing of heaven, resting upon the devout study of the Bible, often induces those long dead in trespasses and sins to turn from the error of their ways, and save their souls alive. The Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard

his spots, because the Agent of the transformation is Almighty: and they may also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. If we expect a moral and religious population, we must lay the foundation deep in an early acquaintance with the sanction of the Law, and the mercies of the Gospel: we must endeavour to impress the lessons of Divine Truth upon the minds of the young, while their attention is pliant and their affections warm: while they are yet, as much as possible unspotted from the world, and before contact with sinful seductions shall have diffused its chilling influence over their hearts. If the duty be important, it should be early commenced: if the undertaking be difficult, it should be entered upon without delay. 'If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, then how can we contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein we trusted they wearied us, then how shall we do in the swelling of Jordan?'"

We cannot sufficiently value the Records of Eternal Truth. The more we love the Bible, the more will its holy influence be visible in our lives.

The true believer in Jesus, when living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is clothed with humility, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart; the peace of God rules within him; he is adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory; he abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost; and receives the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul. Such will be our

character, and such our privileges, if like him we feel the power of grace in our hearts. If our affections are set on things above, we also shall be safe, whatever storms may agitate the world; and if our life be hid with Christ in God, we shall have a sure refuge against the rage of Satan, and the fear of death. While the worldling's treasure is fading as the tints of evening, our portion will be glorious as the days of heaven; for God will be our everlasting light, and the Lamb our glory. How loosely then should we sit to all things here below. Oh that we could practically learn to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

May every heart be impressed with the Apostle's appeal to the church of Corinth: "Brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

The more we contemplate the holiness of God, and the nature of our redemption by Jesus Christ, the more we must be convinced, that sanctification is the beauty and the health of the soul. The holy Christian is the happy Christian. He may, and must have troubles as he journeys to his heavenly rest; but so long as Jesus is his guide and guardian, darkness may reign without, but all shall be peace and light within.

Divine Truth, like the meridian sun, shines

with resplendent lustre in the Book of God. The glory of Jehovah is the Alpha and Omega of all its revelations. Is a world created?—it is by the Word of God. Is a world redeemed?—it is through the love of God. Every blessing flows from him—all praise belongs to him. Pride wants its share of merit in the work of redemption, but Truth levels the proud pretension with the dust.

With what force does the Apostle repel the self-righteous plea, and refute the sceptical cavil. In all his writings, he maintains one constant truth: "By grace are ye saved,.....not of works, lest any man should boast."

The author of all holiness is Almighty God; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.

The meritorious cause of sanctification is Jesus Christ; who, by his death and obedience, has procured for us the gift of the Holy Ghost, to renew our souls after his image in righteousness and true holiness; and therefore he is made unto us *sanctification*.

The instruments which God employs in the hands of the Spirit, to produce the blessing of holiness, are his Word and Sacraments, the ministers of his Gospel, and the various dispensations of his Providence.

Gospel sanctification consists in the mortification of our corrupt affections, whereby the power of original sin is weakened: and in the vivification or quickening of our souls to a new and divine

life, whereby habitual acts of filial obedience are performed.

The work of sanctification extends to the whole man; body, soul, and spirit. The design of God, in our sanctification is: that the mind be enlightened to know himself as the chief good, and his mercy in Christ as the highest blessing; that we be made acquainted with the corruption of our nature, and the remedy which he has provided; that our will be moulded into his Will, and our constant aim be, the promotion of his glory: that the memory be stored with heavenly truths, and daily replenished from his Holy Word with new subjects for delightful meditation: that the conscience be made tender and alive to the calls of the Spirit; afraid of sin, while delivered from guilty fears through the blood of Jesus: that the affections of love, joy, grief, and fear be all brought under due regulation, through the indwelling Spirit, and made to run in one uniform channel of evangelical holiness:—that those desires of the soul, which are of a more animal nature be brought into subjection to the Law of Christ; while the body is made subservient to the powers of the renewed mind.

Such ought to be the happy state of every true believer in Jesus, and such, in some measure, is his state, when he walks in love, and in the light of the divine favour.

But, it may be asked—Is his sanctification, while in the body, complete and entire, wanting nothing? Alas! no. Although the above description is true, with respect to what the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, as all his works are

like himself, pure and holy: yet, through the remainders of corruption, this blessed work is greatly impeded and retarded in its growth.

There still remains much darkness to be dissipated from the mind; much selfishness to be subdued in the will; much forgetfulness of God to be rectified in the memory; much hardness to be softened in the conscience; much irregularity to be removed from the affections; much self-indulgence to be mortified in the animal passions. All this creates that conflict, that up-hill work, that struggling, and wrestling, and fighting, that earnestness in prayer, that cleaving to Jesus, that reliance on his grace, that display of his power, that exercise of his mercy, which are constantly experienced in the eventful life of the true believer.

All these things St. Paul felt when he said: "I run—I fight—I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do; I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Is this our experience? Can we say with the Apostle—"when I am weak, then am I strong?" Conscious of our spiritual weakness, and in full reliance on the strength of Jesus, do we in faith draw out of his fulness grace for grace? The enemy may alarm, but he cannot destroy the children of God, for whom Christ died. How sweetly consoling are the Saviour's words: "Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your

heart shall rejoice, and your joy, no man taketh from you."

Blessed then are they who hear his voice, and follow him through evil report and good report. They and they only are the sheep of his pasture. Having purchased them with his own blood, he will preserve them by his power, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

How fully is this truth declared by the Apostle: "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Oh! blessed and consolatory conclusion! Can we now for a moment doubt his willingness to save? Did he die for us, and will he not preserve us? Did he pray for us, and will he not hear our prayers? Did he invite us to come, and will he forbid our approach? His compassion is not diminished, because he is now in glory. His love is not abated, because the heavens have received him out of our sight. His tenderness is not less susceptible, now that he is removed from the innocent infirmities of our nature. He still can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He still feels in heaven, for his poor afflicted members upon earth. Though Lord of all, having all power

in heaven and in earth, he is not insensible to the need of his people. He is their friend, who loveth at all times; and who, when they are gathered together in his name, is ever in the midst of them. If persecuted for his sake, he graciously identifies himself with them: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me?*" If relieved, in the name of a disciple, he condescendingly accepts the benefit, as done to himself: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me.*"

O how inconceivably great is such love as this! Well might the grateful Apostle, who was himself a wonderful subject of it, fervently pray, that the Ephesians might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God.

Jesus, having loved his own, will love them unto the end, and glorify them with his own glory. His work and ways, like Himself, are infinite and everlasting.

The graces of God's Spirit are not, in the hearts of his children, like morning mists which soon disperse;—they resemble the morning light, which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day. Their faith, like a well-built tower, whose foundation is laid in a rock, can withstand the assaults of the enemy, and the raging of the storm.

What are all enemies and storms, however powerful and violent, when brought into contest with Jehovah Jesus? They are weak as the chaff before the whirlwind; or, as the flax before the de-

vouring fire. In the strength of Christ we must, and shall prevail.

Let us then trust, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy. Jesus ever reigns. Reposing with stedfast faith on his Divinity, atonement, and intercession, we may smile in the midst of danger, having nothing to fear but sin.

How precious are these truths, whose everlasting lines gladden and support the Church: "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

"My Father knows my feeble frame,
He knows how poor I am;
Untold he knows it all:
The least temptation serves to draw
My footsteps from my Father's law,
And make me slide and fall.

"Of this, I give him daily proof,
And yet he does not cast me off,
But owns me still as his;
He spares, he pities, he forgives
The most rebellious *child* that lives,
So great his patience is.

"And shall I then a pretext draw
Again to violate his law?
My soul revolts at this:
I'll love, and wonder, and adore,
And beg that I may sin no more
Against such love as his."

Contemplate, O my soul, with rising admiration, the love of God to sinners. Contemplate the freeness, the fulness, the fitness, the all-sufficiency of Christ's salvation. Contemplate the gracious work of the divine Spirit, in its beginning, progress, and completion; till all thy powers are lost in wonder, love, and praise.

How amazing is the kindness and love of God our Saviour to dying sinners, who cast themselves upon his mercy, and stay upon his word. He infuses into their souls a principle of spiritual life, which is no less than eternal life begun. He creates a divine light in their minds, which discovers their disease and their remedy. He imparts *His* strength, by which they persevere, and conquer. He becomes their sun and shield; and gives them grace and glory. He declares them to be his portion, to whom it is his good pleasure to give the kingdom.

The Father hath prepared this kingdom for them, from the foundation of the world. Jesus is gone to prepare a place for them in the mansions of glory. The Spirit descends into their hearts to make them a *prepared people*, and to consecrate them as temples of the living God. The precious blood of Jesus cleanseth them from all sin. His glorious righteousness claims their admittance into the celestial city, and procures their acceptance with the Father. His lovely image is drawn in lines of grace upon their souls, by the unerring hand of the Eternal Spirit. His countless promises are their daily food and portion; and like reviving cordials, strengthen them when labouring under

trials, and contending with the prince of darkness. Should not such love, of which these instances are but as a drop compared to the mighty ocean, constrain thee, O my soul, to love, with all thy powers, this adorable Redeemer?

To live to Christ should indeed be the business of thy life; and if thy business, God will assuredly make it thy blessedness.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON THE SPECIAL GIFTS OF GOD. THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY IN CONTEMPLATING THE PURPOSES OF JEHOVAH. THE STABILITY OF THE NEW COVENANT.

HOW precious are the gifts of God; no human mind can estimate their worth; their value exceeds an angel's computation. With overflowing gratitude let us hourly bless our heavenly Father;

For THE GIFT OF HIS SON,—

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:"

For THE GIFT OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT,—

"If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him:"

For THE GIFT OF A NEW HEART,—

"A new heart will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you:"

For THE GIFT OF INWARD PEACE THROUGH THE SON OF HIS LOVE,—

"My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you:"—

For THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,—

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God:"

For THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE,—

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God, who is infinite in love, does not give and then take away. Of the perpetuity of his gifts we have abundant assurances in his Holy Word. Jesus said to his disciples: "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." God has secured, by promise, the stability of his people:—"I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." St. Peter hath affirmed: "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." And Jesus, to complete the full assurance of hope, hath declared: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

On what an immoveable rock does the believer in Jesus rest all his hopes of heaven. The eternal truth and faithfulness of Jehovah are engaged in covenant, to secure the final happiness of his people.

But, does God never recall any of his gifts? He does indeed frequently resume what he has only *lent;* such as health, riches, friends, and other temporal comforts; and often in righteous judgment, he hides his face from us: but his new covenant blessings, which he gives in, and with, and through his beloved Son, *he gives for ever;* for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Hence, St. Paul could say to the Corinthians: "Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." To the Philippians, he gave the same blessed assurance: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, inasmuch as ye are partakers of my grace."

Happy, thrice happy is the man, who, like Mary, hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from him. These truths may be called the *children's bread.* They are the support and cordials of holy souls, who know by sweet experience the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, the blessedness of being rooted and grounded in love, and the consolation arising from a firm hold of the promises made to them in Christ Jesus.

Those who know not the Truth, through the

teaching of the Spirit, may abuse these privileges of the true believer, by sporting themselves with their own deceivings, and throwing the rein upon the neck of their lusts. But, must we on that account withhold the heavenly manna! Must the children perish for want of bread, because some vitiated hearts may destroy its wholesome quality? Shall fragrant flowers no longer scatter their perfume, because a few of them may be converted to pernicious purposes? Would we desire the Almighty to withhold his providential blessings, because they are often perverted and abused? As it was in the days of the Apostle, even so it is now; the carnal mind turns food into poison, and blessings into curses.

O that we may have grace to draw out of the precious truths of God, all the benefit and blessedness, which they are designed to convey.

The character and state of redeemed sinners are most admirably delineated in the seventeenth Article of the Church of England. Their election in Christ being declared, their spiritual state is thus described: "They are called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they, through grace, obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made the sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

This is a beautiful epitome of the Christian's walk to glory, which the Apostle has so fully re-

vealed in his various Epistles, by the unerring pen of inspiration.

Whatever poisonous consequences may be drawn by the corrupt heart, from the sweetest truths of God's Word, of this we are certain, that all is good which comes from God, and all is done right, which is done from a principle of faith in Christ, and in obedience to his will. While we cultivate this holy frame, our duties will be pleasant, our delights will be pure, and our hopes will be sanctified.

"Let us then think often on the nature, the extent, and the influence, of the love of Christ;—what designs it formed;—with what energy it acted;—with what perseverance it pursued its object;—what obstacles it surmounted;—and what sweetness it imparted under the severest trials. And then, let us remember, it is still the same Almighty, efficacious love, free, sovereign, and everlasting, the present and eternal portion of every believer in Jesus. It is thy portion, even thine, O sinner, if thou hast laid hold on Jesus; if thou hast fled to him as thy only refuge from the storm; if thou hast received him into thy heart by faith."

There is nothing more clearly revealed, or more frequently insisted upon in the Holy Scriptures, than a holy walk and conversation, as the fruit and evidence of a justifying faith. Without this blessed work of the Spirit, religion is but a lifeless form, unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to man.

When the sinner changes his state before God,

through faith in the atonement of Christ, he changes also his character before men, through the renewal of the inner man. He becomes a new creature and walks in newness of life. His views, intentions, and designs are new. His affections are placed upon new objects. His will receives a new bias; and in the nervous language of St. Paul—"Old things pass away, and all things become new."

The true believer is a decided character. He does not halt between two opinions. His choice is deliberately and firmly made. The Divine Spirit has convinced him of his danger, and taught him where to find pardon, peace, and joy. He wholly relies on the power and grace of Jesus, receives strength equal to his day, and though encompassed with infirmities, and groaning under the burden of the flesh, he runs the race which is set before him, and, through grace, obtains the prize.

How different from all this is the formal professor of Christianity. His heart is cold and comfortless, while that of the true believer is lively and joyful. The one, has the spirit of a slave, the other, that of a child. The one, serves God through fear, the other, from a principle of love.

Though we see as through a glass darkly, yet quite enough is revealed to us in the Bible, to condemn us if we miss the road to heaven. What we want is, an humble mind to receive the great truths of the Gospel as *practical* truths, which were revealed, not for the purpose of making us disputants, but disciples of Jesus Christ; not, that we

may indulge our speculative opinions, but that we may be made wise unto salvation.

However extensive may be our knowledge, or however animated our feelings, it will avail us nothing, while we remain destitute of those scriptural marks which designate the children of God, and which can alone prove us to be among the chosen in Christ Jesus. This truth shines as with a sun-beam in the page of Revelation, that the people of God are a holy people, each possessing that inward purity which manifests itself by outward acts of piety.

It is painful to think with what unhallowed freedom some persons speak and write about the Divine Decrees. They assert their opinions with an authority most bold and daring; and are ready to anathematize all, whose views do not accord with their own. This state of mind is the offspring of pride.

The farther advanced the real Christian is in the grace of the Gospel, and the more he possesses the spirit of a little child. He becomes more humble, more teachable, more submissive, and more dependant upon the light and guidance of the Holy Ghost. He knows his own nothingness, and the Divine Immensity. This bending of the mind and will is the blessed effect of the Spirit's teaching: for, how is it possible, that a finite creature should grasp Infinity; or that a mind, so contracted as ours, should comprehend the Eternal Jehovah, in all his purposes and decrees? What created being can unfold those mysteries of grace which were treasured up in the Divine Mind, be-

fore time began, and which can only be known, as the Spirit has been pleased to reveal them to us by the Prophets and the Apostles?

Being commissioned to preach these wonders of redeeming love, the indefatigable Apostle declared to the Corinthian church the source from whence they came: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the word which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

This important declaration of St. Paul, puts the seal of inspiration upon his communications to the churches, and makes his writings to be *the Word of God.* It is also a fulfilment of the Saviour's promise to his disciples: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them

now. Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, he shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Thus the Gospel dispensation is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit.

Man would be wise above what is written; taking reason for his pilot, he loves to launch into a sea of theory and conjecture. Pride swells his canvass; and while in quest of some discovery, which he fondly hopes shall immortalize his name, his vessel, freighted with vanity, is driven by every wind of doctrine, till at length it founders amidst the rocks of infidelity.

Knowing the danger of such unhallowed speculations, St. Paul, with apostolic faithfulness, thus warns the Colossians: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." He also cautions Timothy: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing, have erred concerning the faith."

Were our minds duly humbled under a conscious feeling of our ignorance, we should seek for wisdom from above, that we may know what is good to be known, and experience the sanctifying influence of the Truth upon our hearts. However we may wish it, we cannot reach beyond the limits which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed. Even within that boundary line, there are many things hard to be understood. Humility and obedience

will guide us, through the Spirit, into all truth: for, "If any man will do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Mutability is inscribed on every earthly thing: but, "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations." This divine stability and unchangeableness was the rock upon which David built his hopes: "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

This truth comforted the afflicted Jeremiah: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying: Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Isaiah was honoured to be the bearer of this divine consolation to the suffering Church: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

A time of trial is the time when the promises of God are peculiarly precious. The Lord, whose grace is sufficient for us, has grace in store for suffering seasons.—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." This was experienced at a period of national judgment, when the king of Babylon was commissioned to carry away captive the idolatrous house of Judah.

During this season of distress, the prophet Jeremiah was favoured with a divine declaration of

faithfulness and mercy. It would seem, to the eye of sense, that the promise, made to the house of David, was about to be cancelled by the overwhelming desolation.—But God will never disappoint the hopes of his saints, who rest upon his Truth. They may partake of the general calamity, but not of its *penal character;* for while the wicked are made to drink of the cup of divine indignation, they shall be refreshed with the abundance of peace. At such a period, the Lord, as he has graciously promised, will be a little sanctuary to his people; a refuge from the storm, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

To these hidden ones, thus saith the Lord: "If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant. If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven: then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant." O! how firm is the promise of Jehovah. He might well say: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

But as his promise is true to his people, so are his threatenings to his enemies. The rebellious Jews had sent to Egypt for help against the Chaldeans: "When the army of Pharoah was come forth out of Egypt, and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem."

This would inspire the Jews with hopes of deliverance. They probably began to think—Now we shall see what will become of Jeremiah's predictions; neither we, nor our land shall fall a prey to Nebuchadnezzar. Trusting to their worldly policy, they despised the Word of the Lord, and began to indulge the infidel hope, that the divine threatening would prove abortive.

The Lord, who can search the deep recesses of the heart, sent this message to his unbelieving people: "Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah: Behold Pharoah's army which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt, into their own land; and the Chaldeans shall come again and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying: the Chaldeans shall depart from us, for they shall not depart."

Now mark the impossibility of defeating the purposes of Him, who can destroy a wicked people, by the weakest instrument: "For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but *wounded men* among them, yet should THEY rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire."

O that rebellious sinners would lay this to heart; for neither wisdom nor strength, however matured or combined, can defeat the purposes of Jehovah, whose Will is sovereign, righteous, and holy. The weaker the means which are employed, the more is the power of God manifested thereby. The locust, the caterpillar, and the palmer worm

can reduce a land of plenty into barrenness, as expeditiously as the devouring sword. Sooner than the Word of God shall fail, Jesus has assured us, that the stones would immediately cry out. Human projects are uncertain in their results—not so the divine counsel: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words," said the Omnipotent Saviour, "shall not pass away."

As the judgments of God overtake his enemies, so do his mercies encircle his people. When the famine was desolating the land of Israel, the prophet Elijah was sustained by that Almighty hand, which in all ages protects and feeds the saints:—"Hide thyself by the brook Cherith,—I have *commanded the ravens* to feed thee there." O thou afflicted believer, whatever be thy straits and trials, God has means to help and deliver thee, as he did his suffering servant. When the brook was dried up, then came the word: "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, behold, I have *commanded a widow woman* to sustain thee." It was not a king or a noble who was to preserve the life of this holy Prophet,—no;—it was to be a *poor widow*, who, with two sticks, was about to bake her last cake for herself and her son, that they might eat it, and die! Let these instances of God's providential care, and miraculous preservations, shame us out of our unbelief and mistrust of his goodness;—"for the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."

The Bible is full of wonders. This delightful Book would arrest the attention, and attract

the admiration of mankind, were it not for its *holy character*. Its light is too pure—its standard is too exalted—its statements are too humbling, for the pride and wickedness of the natural heart. In the Bible, truth shines with unclouded lustre. Wherever it is received in faith and love, there, darkness flies before it. At the glorious Reformation, its Holy Light, concealed in cloistered cells, shot forth, filling those nations with unnumbered blessings which embraced its heavenly doctrines. O may we never by our sins, provoke our God to withdraw His TRUTH from us.

Protesting against Papal errors and Infidel blasphemies, let us rally around the Word of God —that standard of Eternal Truth. Clinging to the cross, and confessing Christ, let us ever, with fearless integrity, maintain our Gospel principles, and earnestly contend for that faith, once delivered to the saints, which is founded upon THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE,—and nothing but THE BIBLE.

Whatever infidelity may assert, this truth is written as with a sun-beam on the page of Scripture, and in the Book of Providence, that all the purposes of Jehovah, whether of mercy or of judgment, shall have their full accomplishment. The puny arm of man can neither turn aside the burning wrath, nor suspend the shower of blessing.

We naturally expect great effects to arise from what we conceive to be powerful causes. So did Naaman, when he esteemed the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel. "But, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord—My strength

is made perfect in weakness.—Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

This truth, so humiliating to our vanity, St. Paul boldly declared to the Corinthians: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

For this reason he was not ashamed to say: "When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Though honoured to preach the Gospel of his grace, this humble servant of Christ sought not glory from men. Ever desirous to exalt the Saviour, he told the Corinthians: "We have this treasure in earthern vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Humility is inseparable from the Christian character. Pride was not made for man; yet man

is a proud sinner,—a fugitive from God. His darkened understanding, his perverted will, his corrupt affections, his polluted memory, his seared conscience, his defiled imagination, all prove him to be a creature fallen from original righteousness, obedient to some other power, and pursuing an end, the very opposite to that for which he was created. Satan being intrenched in his self-love, obtains an easy conquest over him. The artful foe whispers to his heart the flattering tale, and he receives it with complacency. Listening to this hellish fiend, he boldly eats of the forbidden fruit, and braves the vengeance of Omnipotence. Truth is too bright for his diseased intellect;—too stern and faithful for his fastidious ear.—He slights the monitory warnings of his *truest friend*, and fondly cleaves to Satan and his lies. O what a blessing is a humble mind, a teachable spirit, a dependant frame of heart. This happy state of soul contains within itself the abundance of peace. Jesus dwells in such a lowly bosom, and beautifies the meek with his salvation. Happy shall we be, if our wills are made conformable to the Will of God. Then, however dark may be his dispensations towards us, at evening-time it shall be light. Then, when heart and flesh shall fail, Jesus will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

" Would that my heart were fully bent
To serve thee, Lord, in faith and love;
That my desires were all intent
On heavenly joys, and things above:
Vouchsafe with energy divine
To visit me, and make me thine.

" O Saviour, with thy presence cheer
This heart, and chase the gloom away;
Rise, Sun of Righteousness, and here
Light up an everlasting day:
Thy grace dispels the shades of night;
Where'er thou dwellest, there is *light*,

" I seek thee in affliction's hour,
When every earthly comfort fails;
I seek thee when the tempter's pow'r,
Against my feeble heart prevails:
My burden'd bosom breathes its sigh
To Thee, and knows that thou art nigh.

" Dear Lord, I shall not ask in vain,
For thou hast taught me how to pray;
Here I will wait till I obtain
Thy grace to take my sins away:
My helpless soul with pity see,
And let it now be fill'd with thee."

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD, THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEVER'S HAPPINESS. THE FINAL GLORIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.

THE unchangeable nature of the promises of God in Christ, which are YEA, and AMEN, to the glory of his grace, gladdened the afflicted Apostle under all his troubles. By the inspiration of the Spirit, he was enabled to lead his Christian converts to the one only source of all their holiness and happiness,—the eternal purpose and love of God in Jesus Christ, through whom their souls were redeemed and sanctified. The sweet Psalmist of Israel struck his harp to this inspiring theme: "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy blessing is upon thy people." O may we catch the sacred fire, and feel our every power glowing with holy love. None but ransomed sinners can fully estimate the blessings of redemption.

Salvation springs altogether from the grace and sovereign will of God, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that

showeth mercy; who dispenseth his blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, as seemeth good in his sight.

All blessings in time and eternity must be traced to this infinite love of God the Father, in, and through, his beloved and co-equal Son. The heart of Paul glowed with holy fervour whenever he dwelt upon this theme of mercy. Angels delight to look into this mystery of love. Devils tremble at the amazing sight of man's redemption. None but unhumbled sinners turn from it with disgust!

When writing to the churches, the divinely-inspired Apostle kept back nothing that was profitable; neither did he shun to declare the whole counsel of God.

He had tasted that the Lord is gracious; to him Christ was precious; and his heart's desire and prayer to God was, that his way might be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations.

With full assurance of faith and hope, he declared to the Roman Christians: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose: For when he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here we have presented to our view the golden chain of grace and mercy, reaching from everlast-

ing to everlasting, which draws up into glory all who are the called according to *his* purpose.

To the Ephesian church St. Paul unfolded the hidden wisdom of redeeming love: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Here again grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

To the Thessalonians, the Apostle imparted the same glorious revelation: "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this comprehensive passage, we behold the source, the means, and the end of that salvation which will fill heaven with unceasing praise.

St. Peter, in unison with his brother Apostle, being taught by the same Spirit of Truth and Love, styles believers: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Archbishop Leighton has made the following beautiful remarks on these words of Peter: "This foreknowledge is his eternal and unchangeable love. 'Hath not the potter power over the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?' This, if it be harsh, yet is apostolic doctrine. This deep, we must admire, and always in considering, close with this, 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.'

"Effectual calling is inseparably tied to this eternal foreknowledge or election on the one side, and salvation on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven, in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down to earth, into the hearts of his children; and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them; if therefore they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, those are the counter-part of the golden characters of his love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing, writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the Scriptures: and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life, that God hath by himself from eternity. So finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return to that ocean which ariseth from eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

"If election, effectual calling, and salvation, be

inseparably linked together, then, by any one of them, a man may lay hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is that way, wherein we may attain and ought to seek that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore, make your calling sure, and by that, your election; for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in the performance.

"Though the mariner sees not the *pole-star*, yet the needle of the compass that points to it, tells him which way he sails. Thus, the heart that is touched with the loadstone of divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking towards God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward, towards the haven of eternal rest.

"He that loves may be sure he was *loved first*; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently, that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him and be happy in him for ever: for our love and electing of him, is but the return and the repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us."

The writer of these pages has no wish to uphold any *human* system of theology. He desires simply to declare, in the words of the inspired Apostle, the whole counsel of God, and to keep back nothing which he deemed profitable to the Church of Christ. Angry controversies and contentions wound the mind, embitter the spirit, and destroy the peace and unity of the Church.

To every prayerful student of the Bible, it

must be most apparent, that all the doctrines of the Gospel, when received in the simplicity of faith, must, from their nature, have a practical influence on the heart and life. For they are revealed for this very purpose, to make us humble, and holy, and happy.

How forcibly does St. Paul impress this truth upon his beloved Timothy: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

The first seal is secret to us: "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The second seal is visible to all: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

If we bear the second seal, we may be scripturally assured that the first is impressed upon us.

All who bear the broad seal of sanctification, have also the private seal of adoption; for if we love God, it is because he has first loved us.

Let us then seek for those precious fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, which are the indubitable marks of the children of God.

True Christians may differ from each other in language, national customs, and other external circumstances, yet, they all resemble each other in their likeness to God. Their views and feelings, their conflicts and supports, are substantially the same.—Being born from above, and taught by the same Spirit, they each bear the stamp of their

divine origin, though separated by oceans and trackless deserts.

Writing to the Ephesians, the holy Apostle mentions this blessed operation of grace: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Also to the Corinthians: "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

All who truly believe in Jesus, have the witness *in themselves;* for the indwelling of the Spirit, that precious fruit of the atonement, is known by the change which is produced in the soul. The believer, by this holy transformation of character, evidences his "election of God," and his interest in the merits and intercession of the Redeemer.

All who possess the Spirit of Christ, have the mind of Christ, and follow the example of Christ. The Holy Spirit guides the believer into all truth, both in doctrine and practice. His genuine work is, the production of light in the mind, and of love in the heart. Thus, all who are actually pardoned through the blood of Christ, are graciously sealed by the Spirit of Christ to the day of redemption.

The Church of England, in her Homily on Whit-Sunday, is in perfect accordance with this truth of Scripture: "It is the Holy Ghost, *and no other thing*, that doth quicken the minds of men,

stirring up good and godly motions in their hearts, which are agreeable to the will and commandment of God, such as otherwise, of their own crooked and perverse nature, they could never have. That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. As who should say, man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motions, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds. As for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, *if he have any at all in him*, they proceed *only* of the Holy Ghost, who is the *only worker of our sanctification*, and maketh us new men in Christ."

How blessed is that man in whom the Spirit of God condescends to dwell. He has new joys, new cares, new hopes, new desires. He prays *by* the Spirit, and *for* the Spirit. Receiving the spirit of adoption, he approaches the throne of grace with confidence,—views God as his Father,—possesses the temper and prospects of a child, and delights in every thing which promotes the glory of his divine Redeemer.

"Surely, may such an one say, the Lord hath loved me with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness hath he drawn me, even when I was far from him: and now having brought me nigh, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, he will preserve me to the end, as much by his unvarying truth, as he led me at first by his spontaneous mercy. What shall I *render* then unto the Lord for all the benefits which he hath

bestowed upon me!—I can only *render* to him by *receiving* from him. The more I know of his goodness, and taste of his bounty, the more I am indebted to his grace. He himself must, and, I doubt not, will enable me to receive the cup of salvation, and to call upon his holy name, as my Lord and my God! And—when the heavens are rolled together as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat; when the earth, with all the inhabitants of it, is dissolved; then may I, and each of my brethren, say: '*I have lost nothing;* still I can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.'"

It was to such holy characters as these, that St. Paul addresses this affectionate exhortation:—"Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one to another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

Thus we see how true faith purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, and triumphs over death and hell. True faith is inseparable from holiness, for the same Divine Power which enables the sinner to put on Christ as his righteousness, transforms him into a holy temple for Christ to dwell in, as his purifier. This is the glory and blessedness of the Gospel. It brings the sinner into union with his Saviour; and raises him from earth to heaven.

The influences of faith are extended through the whole soul, and its life is spread by a vigorous circulation. Wherever faith is set up in the mind, as a convincing light to discover the sweetness and excellency of Christ, it will discover itself in the will, by an eager appetite to feed on his pleasant fruits; and in the affections, by that heavenly flame which is ever ascending towards him as the chiefest good.

This was exactly the effect produced in the soul of the great Apostle, when divine light broke in upon his mind. He saw the glory of Jesus; his will was captivated, and his affections were wholly fixed upon him. No sufferings could deter him from his service, no enemy could drive him from his post of honour. As he gloried in the cross of Christ, so he gloried in tribulations also, when endured for his sake. Ardently desiring the salvation of sinners, he laboured with unceasing perseverance to make them acquainted with their only Saviour; and, perhaps, no man was ever so blessed in his labours of love.

O! what a glorious day will that be, when this holy man of God shall appear before the throne of Jesus, clothed with immortality, and wearing the crown of righteousness. Then will his joy indeed be full. Surrounded by his spiritual children, whom he will know as the fruit of his labours, he shall realize those sweet anticipations of bliss expressed to the Thessalonian believers: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the *presence* of our Lord

Jesus Christ at his coming, for ye are our glory and joy."

As eternal life is the gift of Christ, so, like the good shepherd, he guides his flock in safety to the fold above. Would we reach that heavenly world, we must be ever looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. We must rely upon him for a joyful admission into the realms of peace. He alone can strengthen us for the trials of the way;—he alone can support us under the last conflict with sin and death. If we believe in Jesus with all our heart, the stream, through which we shall have to pass, may be tempestuous, but its waves shall not be suffered to overwhelm us. Jesus will carry us in his bosom, and, through his faithfulness and love, will safely land us on the heavenly shore.

And oh! what bliss will await us there!—No eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, no heart hath conceived, the glory which shall be revealed in us, as the ransomed of the Lord. We shall be heirs of God!—We shall possess him as our portion, who is the possessor of heaven and earth.—We shall be joint-heirs with Christ, who is the Head over all things to the Church. Though now compassed about with infirmities, we shall then be like the sun in his strength; though now allied to the dust, we shall then be made kings and priests unto God. We shall sit with Christ upon his throne, and for ever drink the living waters of purity and joy.

Our toils will then be exchanged for rest. In that region of unsullied happiness, Satan cannot

reach us; wicked men cannot harm us; grief cannot distress us; sin cannot defile us. The day will ever shed its brightness over us, for the Lamb will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory.—We shall then be made like unto Jesus, and shall follow him, as the trophies of his victory, whithersoever he goeth.

O! transporting thought, *to be made like unto Jesus!*—This will form the blessed ingredient in the happiness of heaven. The glorious image of Christ will never be defaced, but the beautiful lines of the new creature will for ever shine in the perfection of beauty, to the praise of redeeming love. Here, we are struggling with imperfection, infirmity, and sin; but there, the happy spirit, disengaged from every weight, will ascend, with lightsome wing, to the bosom of its God and Saviour.

When we come into that happy world above, to be clothed in the white attire of innocence, it will be impossible for one evil thought to slide into our minds. In that region of perfection there will be perfect light in our understandings,—perfect rectitude in our wills,—perfect purity in our affections. Our spiritualized bodies will then no longer clog the soul, but rather assist in quickening the movements of the willing spirit. In heaven, we shall enjoy an eternal communion with God. In this world of clouds and shadows, he is often a God who hideth himself: but there, he will reveal Himself to the Church triumphant, in all the splendour of his glory, in all the fulness of his love. There, we shall have sweet fellowship with angels, and with the spirits of just men made per-

fect; and above all, with Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant. And there, with fulness of grace in our hearts, with diadems of glory on our heads, and with the high praises of God upon our tongues, we shall surround his throne, and shall reign with him for ever and ever. Thus our bliss will be perpetual; it will be an ETERNAL JOY.

With what gratitude, if believers in Jesus, should we now begin the song of praise to the Father of mercies, who, from the beginning hath chosen us unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: to the Son who hath redeemed us unto God by his blood: and to the Spirit who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God. Happy, thrice happy shall we be, if we have the witness in ourselves, that we are the children of God, and can justly conclude that we have saving faith, from *the truth of our sanctification.*

If we are holy, we are believers; but without holiness there can be no settled principle of faith. It is sin which darkens our evidences, and destroys our comfort. A constitutional morbid feeling may prevent our enjoying the blessedness of communion with God, by the dread which it creates in the mind: but, if we are happily preserved from this mental depression, and are delivered from the reigning power of sin, as ransomed sinners we ought to rejoice at all times, and in every thing to give thanks. This is our privilege and felicity, as it is the earnest and foretaste of our eternal bliss.

It is the Will of God, that his people should be happy? the fault is theirs, if they are not so. His law is good, as well as just and holy; its language is: "Do thyself no harm."—His Gospel is love, and breathes good-will towards men; speaking peace through Jesus Christ, and inviting sinners to be reconciled to God. If sinners perish, the cause is from themselves; if they are saved, it is through the unmerited grace of God. Hell will be filled with self-reproaches;—Heaven will resound with never-ending praises.

O! that every self-deceiver may be roused to a sense of his danger, ere it be too late. The loss of worldly property may be retrieved; but our wasted moments can never be recalled. How inexpressibly valuable are moments to an awakened sinner on the bed of death; and yet how little do we estimate their worth, in seasons of health and plenty. The insensibility of the human heart to eternal things is most appalling. A reflecting mind will scarcely think it possible for a man to be so far lost to sober reason, as to fancy himself safe whilst lying on the brink of a crumbling precipice, or standing on the vane of a rolling vessel: yet, thus rash is the man, who, trusting in his own righteousness, and following the sinful desires of his heart, fancies himself secure, and his salvation certain, though he is treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Perhaps some may think, that in the Christian world, few are so entirely lost to every feeling of self-preservation, and the solemnities of a future

judgment, as to act such a madman's part. Happy indeed, were this the case,—yea, happy, if men were influenced by a salutary fear to flee from the wrath to come: if they would be persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, to seek him before the door of mercy is closed. But alas! even under the fair garb of Christianity, nothing is more common than such a worldly, carnal mind. Actions speak more forcibly than words. They are the test of character. Like fruit upon the tree, they show the nature of the man, while motives, like the sap, are hidden from our view.

The delusions of Satan are very powerful. It is high time to awake out of sleep. No moment should be lost in deciding the important question: Am I Christ's, or am I not?—Is Jesus the *one object* of my love, of my desire, of my delight? Do I esteem him the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely?

O that the Eternal Spirit of all grace, may display his saving power, in convincing the sinner of his guilt; in revealing to him the mighty Saviour; in leading him to Gethsemane, that there, he may behold the agony and bloody sweat of his Redeemer; in conducting him to the hill of Calvary, that there, he may see the bleeding Lamb of God, dying for his sins.—O that the blessed Spirit may melt his heart to penitence and love, renew his soul, bring him into the Gospel fold, and make him a monument of mercy, a sinner saved by grace.

The door of mercy is still open; the God of grace is waiting to be gracious; Jesus is pointing

to his hands, his feet, his side; inviting us to fly from wrath and misery, to endless bliss and glory. The voice of mercy is now heard: Come, for all things are ready.—Come, for yet there is room.—Come, to the feast prepared by Sovereign Love.—Come, and freely partake of Gospel blessings.

O! that Jesus may draw every heart to himself by the silken cords of love, till the glorious period shall arrive, when all his elect shall be gathered around his throne, redeemed out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, crying with a loud voice, and saying: "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

"Oh! how the thought that I shall know
The man that suffered here below,
To manifest his favour
To me, and those whom most I love,
Or here, or with himself above,
Does my delighted passions move
At that sweet word—For Ever!

"For ever to behold him shine,
For ever-more to call him mine,
And see him still before me:
For ever on his face to gaze,
And meet his full assembled rays,
While all the Father he displays,
To all the saints in glory.

"Not all things else are half so dear,
As his delightful presence here.—
What must it be in heav'n?
'Tis heav'n on earth to hear him say—
As now I journey day by day,
Poor sinner, cast thy fears away,
Thy sins are all forgiv'n.

" But how must his celestial voice
Make my enraptur'd heart rejoice,
When I, in glory, hear him:
While I, before the heav'nly gate,
For everlasting entrance wait,
And Jesus on his throne of state
Invites me to come near him.

" Come in, thou blessed, sit by me,
With my own life I ransom'd thee,
Come, taste my perfect favour:
Come in, thou happy spirit, come;
Thou now shalt dwell with me at home,
Ye blessed mansions, make him room,
For he must stay for ever.

" When Jesus thus invites me in,
How will the heav'nly host begin
To own their new relation?
Come in! come in!—the blissful sound
From ev'ry tongue will echo round,
Till all the chrystal walls resound
With joy of my salvation."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS ON ST. PAUL'S CHARACTER.

THE character and experience of St. Paul, though imperfectly delineated in the foregoing pages, show the nature and blessedness of Christianity. Its heavenly doctrines, its consoling promises, its holy precepts, were so many sources of light, joy, and purity, which, through the transforming power of the Spirit, made the once persecuting Saul of Tarsus, a new creature in Christ Jesus.

It is interesting to trace the origin, and pursue the course, of those principles which made him such a burning and shining light. Perhaps no mere man was ever made so great a blessing to mankind, or underwent such trials for the sake of the Gospel.

From the short review which we have taken of the life of this holy man, it will be evident, that he was no *impostor*. His sacrifice of credit, wealth, and power; his willingness to suffer contempt, poverty, and persecution, abundantly clear his character from this imputation. As far as re-

spects earthly things, he had nothing to gain, but every thing to lose, by declaring himself to be a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

It is also evident, that he was no visionary *enthusiast.* His spirit was free from the violent impulses of fanatical delusion; and his zeal, though fervent, was never tinctured with melancholy or vanity. He did not court persecution or popularity to obtain a name; neither did he, like the votaries of Pagan and Papal superstition, inflict upon himself useless and absurd penances, with a view of propitiating the Almighty, or purchasing heaven. But, if to love Jesus with all the heart,—if to devote all the powers of the mind and body to his service,—if to count all things but loss to win Christ, and be found in Him, be enthusiasm; then, we do not hesitate to say, that St. Paul was indeed of all Enthusiasts, *the Chief.*

It must also be apparent from what we have seen, that the Apostle did not embrace Christianity through the *weakness* of his mental powers; neither was he *duped* by the artifice of others. Being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a noted doctor of the law, his mind was well stored with the learning of those times. His Epistles afford ample proof both of the strength and cultivation of his intellectual faculties; while his commanding eloquence extorted from King Agrippa that striking confession: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

On his way to Damascus, he heard the voice, he saw the glory, he felt the power of Jesus. Be-

ing taught by immediate revelation from above, he embraced the Truth in all its greatness, and straightway preached Christ, in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

Can we review so marvellous an event, and not exclaim: "This hath God wrought!—The finger of God is here!"

Since St. Paul, as appears from the clearest evidence, neither sought to deceive others, nor was himself deceived; every candid mind must be led to these conclusions:—that his faith in Jesus was the result of an overwhelming conviction of the truth of Christianity, which all his Jewish prejudices could not withstand;—that his conversion to the faith which once he destroyed, was the work of God;—that the Christian religion is a Divine Revelation;—and that to reject or neglect the Gospel, is dishonouring to God, and destructive to ourselves.

Blessed is he, who with a thankful heart believes the heavenly Record:—"That God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." As there can be no happiness without holiness, so there can be no holiness without an union by faith to Jesus. Are we abiding in Him—deriving strength from Him—and depending solely upon his great atonement?

He died for sinners.—We are sinners. He hath said: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." If then, as poor sinners, we come unto Him, we shall assuredly be saved.

This is the simple truth of the Gospel. Happy are they, who, like St. Paul, are enabled to em-

brace it with child-like simplicity: for to all such, there shall be a performance of those things, which were told them of the Lord.

In the sufferings of St. Paul, we have seen exemplified that marked hostility which was manifested by the king of Syria, when he commanded his captains to fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

The enmity of the Jews and Gentiles was not directed against Saul of Tarsus until he became a *Christian*, and laboured most zealously in the cause of the despised Nazarene.—It was Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, Christ proclaimed by him, as the King of Israel, who was the real object of their attack.

The world hated Christ, and would not have him to reign over them. They also hated his faithful servants, and sought to destroy them. The enmity of the natural heart still remains the same.

Let a worldly man, however elevated his station, become an humble follower of the crucified Jesus, and condemn the world by his holy life, and soon his once attached friends will manifest their displeasure, either by leaving him with disgust, or by visiting him with scorn and insult.

This spirit of opposition began its deadly ravages in the family of Adam, and is still in active operation. For, "As he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

Should it be asked:—Are not the followers of

Christ in danger of deserting him through fear of suffering? the conduct of St. Paul will afford a sufficient reply.—If left to themselves, they would indeed fall away; therefore they dare not say we *will not;* but through the grace of Christ supporting them, they are enabled boldly to say: "We are ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus."

The exhortation of Peter is truly animating. Having fallen through self-confidence, but being again restored through grace, he knew how to strengthen his brethren: "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

Jesus himself has put the seal of blessedness upon his persecuted saints: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake: rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven."

How bitter is the enmity of wretched fallen man against the God who made him, who redeemed him, and who waits to be gracious to him. The zealous Paul once felt this enmity in his state of blindness; and when converted, deplored it deeply at the foot of the cross. May we not enquire:

What is the state of our hearts? Can we suffer shame and reproach for Jesus' sake; or, do we turn aside through fear, when a cross is appointed for us to bear?

What words can be more awakening, than those which Jesus spoke to his disciples: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

Do we feel our hearts growing cold? Oh! let us look unto Jesus, till they are filled with holy love. He left the bosom of the Father—took upon him our nature—entered into our world of wo—carried our sorrows—bare our sins in his own body on the tree—endured the cross, despising the shame; and then, as the Lord of glory, he burst the bands of death, ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right-hand of the throne of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Can we be insensible to such grace as this? O that the love of God were shed abroad in every heart, then would earth resemble heaven, and the Church of Christ form one holy, happy, and united family.

It cannot be too deeply impressed upon the consciences of men, that love to Jesus is the spring of holy obedience. It is the Divine Alchymy which turns all into gold. A cup of cold water given from this principle shall not lose its reward, while the most costly sacrifice is worthless, if it do not spring from love.

The sacred fire of love can only be kindled by Him whose name and nature is LOVE; and when once kindled, it can only be kept burning on the altar of our hearts by the constant supply of his grace. The prayer of faith obtains the holy oil with which our vessels must be filled, and our lamps trimmed, while waiting in joyful expectation for the coming of the Bridegroom. Increasing with the increase of faith in the atonement of Christ, this heavenly flame will burn brighter and more fervently, the nearer it approaches the source from whence it came.

"Yes!—love indeed is light from heav'n;
A spark of that immortal fire
With angels shar'd, by Jesus giv'n,
To lift from earth our low desire.
Devotion wafts the mind above;
But heav'n itself descends in love;
A feeling from the Godhead caught
To wean from self, each sordid thought;
A ray of Him, who form'd the whole,
A glory circling round the soul."

"Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God."—"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Happy then is the heart in which the spirit of love dwells and reigns.—Such a heart is the abode of the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and who delights in the lowly, loving disciple of the crucified and glorified Jesus—his co-equal, co-eternal Son.

Oh! that we may daily live under the sweet

constraining influence of the loving-kindness of our God. Without it, all is dark and cheerless; with it, joy and peace, like lovely flowers, spring up around our path. What are all the vanities of time, but painted bubbles, when compared with this eternal treasure?—Love, joy, peace, survive the tomb; and form that amaranthine wreath which shall for ever adorn and gladden the soul of the glorified believer.

Like his Divine Master, St. Paul had no certain dwelling-place. He was truly a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth. Wherever he went, bonds and imprisonments awaited him.

We, on the contrary, in these days of the Church's prosperity, can dwell at ease, none making us afraid. The law does not unsheath the sword of persecution, nor kindle the martyr's fire.

Is there not a cause for anxious apprehension, lest, while we profess to love Christ, our hearts should become earthly? Are we not in danger of making a *home* of this world, and of setting up our rest here, as if this wilderness were the promised Canaan, rather than the road through which we have to pass to it?

As professing Christians, living in the midst of Gospel light and Gospel privileges, we can readily exclaim against the idolatries of the Heathen, while we forget, that whatever draws away the heart from God, is *an idol* in his sight.

Our domestic ease, our family comforts, too often become our household gods, at whose shrine

we sacrifice the claims of Christian charity, and the spiritual interests of perishing millions. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

There is in every man a powerful principle, which God has wisely implanted for the purposes of self-preservation. The second great commandment in the Law appeals to this principle: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus refers to it: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

But there is a sinful love of self—a spirit of selfishness which is utterly at variance with the law of love. Nothing can extirpate this evil principle but love to Christ. As believers in Jesus, we must daily live in the exalted spirit of his *new commandment:* "Love one another, as *I have loved you.*" The love of Christ to us is the Gospel pattern of our love to others.

With enlarged heart, the Apostle enforced this disinterested duty on the Philippian Christians: "Let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

With thankfulness to Almighty God we must acknowledge, that, of late years much has been done in our favoured island to advance the cause of Christ throughout the earth; as well as to widen the circle of general beneficence: yet much still remains to be done. This is but the seed-time

of the world. Let us then, in the spirit of faith and prayer, cast our bread-corn on the waters, for we shall find it after many days.

If we truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall, and must, rejoice in every thing which advances the interests of his kingdom. A heart warmed with the love of God, cannot rest satisfied with mere verbal expressions of gratitude, for the blessings of redemption. Love is an active principle. Its language is: What can I do, however feebly, to promote the great and good work of evangelizing the world? If contributing of my substance will aid the noble cause, I will gladly cast into the treasury of that which God hath given me. If active exertion be required, I am willing to spend, and be spent in advancing my Saviour's kingdom. If advocating the cause of Christ be needed, I will endeavour to speak, though with a faultering tongue. Such is the language of love. To all this, the servant of Christ will join his fervent prayers, and rejoice, with all his Christian brethren, at the enlargement and prosperity of Zion.

"He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully,"—is the Apostle's appeal to our Christian liberality. Do we act agreeably to this practical knowledge? Do the rich professors of Christianity never first consult their family luxuries, their equipages, and decorations, before they dare to answer the Saviour's call: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, and follow me." Our

loving Saviour, though he does not require his followers to enter upon a state of voluntary poverty, or to deny themselves the innocent enjoyment of his providential bounties; yet, he does demand their chief affection, and a willingness to impart cheerfully of their substance for his sake.

"As Jesus sat over against the treasury, he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing." Many are willing to make an offering out of their competency, but few, to make a *sacrifice* of their comforts. Liberality must be estimated, not by quantity, but *proportion*. A splendid gift from a wealthy person forms only an offering, when no inconvenience is felt by the rich donation;—A small sum given by a poor man is a real sacrifice, when some *privation* is experienced by this act of generosity. On this account it was, that, looking at the *largeness* of her heart, and the *smallness* of her means, our Lord declared: "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want, did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

As the love of the world is the sin which easily besets us, when sheltering itself under the creditable appellation of prudence, economy, and forethought, our Saviour has given us a *double caution* against its pernicious influence. "Take heed, and

beware of covetousness."—"Watch, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

The Gospel indeed does not condemn a prudent management of our concerns;—it rather enjoins it: for, "a good man will guide his affairs with discretion:"—but, it does condemn that anxious, murmuring, fretful spirit, which disfigures the conduct of many professors.

How quieting are the words of Jesus: "*Take no thought for the morrow:* for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." How cheering are those of the Apostle: "I would have you without carefulness.—Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" In this happy spirit did the primitive Christians live. They eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.

While we feel, and *act as stewards* of the manifold gifts of God, we shall be preserved from parsimonious cares, and prodigal expenditures.—Knowing that we are not our own, being bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God, we shall seek for grace to live to our Redeemer's glory. The world will no longer sway our affections, while we remember how quickly the fashion of it is passing away; and how soon we shall be called to give an account of our stewardship, either for the one, or for the ten, talents which may have been entrusted to his care.

Though all do not become martyrs, yet all

must possess the martyr's spirit; and though all are not called upon to forsake their houses and friends, as the noble-minded Paul did, yet all must be in readiness to do so, when the cause and glory of Christ demand the sacrifice.

It was "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," that he gave the exhortation: "Be not conformed to this world." The very admonition implies the *danger* of worldly conformity, and the *proneness* of the heart to earthly things. Who can say: that he is always raised above the undue influence of terrestrial objects;—that he is daily passing, as it were, on TIPTOE, across this world of vanity. Alas! alas! we too often sink into the mire of earthly-mindedness, and have our thoughts absorbed amidst the trifles of a day! But what can the world profit us? It can neither secure us against temporal evils, or save us from eternal misery. It cannot, for a single moment, prolong our existence here, or make that existence peaceful and happy. It is often a clog, but never a help in moments of spiritual distress. And yet, we love the world, though, by its deceitful smile, it robs us of our peace, entangles us in its snares, and would, if left under its power, eventually destroy our souls.

How seldom, in the Christian world, do we find a full display of the mind of Christ; who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. If few be willing to sacrifice their *superfluities* for the Gospel's sake, how much fewer are found ready to leave the bosom of an affectionate family, to brave the dangers of the ocean, to endure the

sicknesses of foreign climes, and all those other trials which await the man, who, in the spirit of the self-denying Apostle, delights to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and would rather die than forsake his God and Saviour.

Few, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully. Yet nothing is more abhorrent to our all-gracious Redeemer, than a divided heart and a lukewarm spirit. As all our happiness in time and in eternity is the fruit of his love to us: so all our holiness is the fruit of his Spirit, drawing our hearts, and fixing them wholly upon Himself.

May we be graciously delivered from a worldly spirit, which can assume a thousand forms to allure and deceive us. To be in the world, and yet not of the world; to use it for our temporal necessities, and yet not to abuse it for carnal purposes; is a high Christian attainment, which St. Paul possessed in an eminent degree.

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and to show them unto us; to convince us of the emptiness of every earthly good; and the folly of seeking our happiness in a world which lieth in wickedness. Sin blinds the understanding, and sears the conscience; but, when the heart is filled with the love and Spirit of Jesus, how weak are the temptations of Satan,—how powerless are the allurements of the world,—how comparatively smooth the paths of sorrow.

From the *Book of Nature* we may derive much useful knowledge. Solomon sends the sluggard to the ant. Isaiah, the inconsiderate, to the

ox and the ass. Jeremiah, the forgetful, to the stork and the swallow. Animals and birds teach us many important lessons :—Thus, when the squirrel is disturbed, it skips from bough to bough, continuing always near the earth; while the lark, when alarmed in her nest, flies upwards with rapid wing, singing as she soars. Just so the worldling, when beset with grief, goes from one terrestial object to another; while the Christian, leaving all his earthly cares behind him, rises on the wings of faith and prayer, to seek, with tuneful heart, his rest in God.

Do we thus seek for consolation from our God and Saviour, and find it in the hour of trial? Jacob wrestled and prevailed.—May we be Israels with God, and never cease to pray, till he vouchsafe that realizing faith, which lessens the weight of earthly sorrow; that hope and fear which bear the soul with steady flight to heavenly glory!

Jesus, dwelling in the heart by faith, invigorates the feeblest saint, and dispels the deepest gloom. The believer, resting in the full assurance of hope upon the unchanging promises of his Saviour, triumphs over every enemy, and reaches in safety his eternal rest.

Such was the blessedness which cheered and strengthened the heart of St. Paul, and such is the blessedness which animates all the children of God.

In the days of his unregeneracy, we have seen how the Apostle prided himself in being a descendant of Abraham; or, as he styled himself, "an

Hebrew of the Hebrews." Like the rest of the Pharisees, he esteemed himself to be righteous, and despised others, especially the Gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. But, when it pleased God to reveal to him that Saviour, by whom the middle wall of partition was broken down; he could give the right-hand of fellowship to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

This is the true Christian spirit, which unites the whole body of the Church, by that charity which is the bond of perfectness. For this uniting spirit, our divine Redeemer supplicated his Holy Father, previous to his crucifixion: "Sanctify them through thy Truth;—thy Word is truth: that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." If *union* be the strength and beauty of the Church of Christ, how great must be the guilt of those who tarnish and weaken it by needless schisms and divisions.

Through the blindness of our minds, we are too ready to value ourselves upon our external privileges, as if belonging to a pure Church must of necessity make us pure. It is one thing to make a profession of religion, and another to possess its spirit, and to feel its power.

From Scripture and experience we learn that the heart of man is the same in all ages and countries, while alienated from the life of God. Outward circumstances indeed make some differ-

ence, but the radical evils of the heart remain the same. In Christian lands, unconverted persons are no better than heathens, except as they are brought under the predominating influence of Christianity, which restrains their vices: while, in those nations, where sensuality forms a part of the prevailing superstition, they are more openly licentious.

How little reason have we then to plume ourselves upon our outward advantages, or to exalt ourselves above others; when the difference arises, not from any superior natural goodness of our own, but from circumstances over which, as far as we are concerned, our wisdom and foresight had no controul. Wicked men are greatly indebted to Christianity, and to the *restraining grace* of God, for numberless outward comforts which they enjoy, though they either know it not, or are unwilling to acknowledge it. But oh! what an unspeakable mercy is *converting grace*, which brings unnumbered blessings in its train: for, godliness hath the promise not only of the life that now is, but also of that which is to come.

This blessedness, St. Paul experienced in all its richness; and proclaimed it to a dying world, in all its fulness. He knew, that the grace of God makes all the difference between one man and another;—collectively, between nations, where Christianity is established, and where it is not:—individually, between those who are Christians indeed, and those who are Christians only in name. Being well acquainted with the workings of spiritual pride, he put these humbling questions to

each Corinthian convert: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it."

Are we the subjects of this *distinguishing* grace? With what ardour then should we follow the footsteps of the Apostle, and engage with all our hearts in the service of our Redeemer. Has the Spirit drawn *us* to Christ with the cords of love? How zealously then should we labour for the conversion of mankind. Though despised by the world, we shall be precious in the sight of God. Though, by nature, devoid of spiritual light and power, we shall become, through the Spirit, "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world." Thus was Abraham blessed of God, and made a blessing to all around him; and so are all, who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which obtained for him that exalted title—"THE FRIEND OF GOD."

May the universal Church of Christ, by whatever names its several parts may be distinguished among men, be stirred up to active zeal and self-denial, to increased liberality and fervent prayer. Then will our Zion become a praise in the earth, and all the ends of the world shall see the salvation of our God.

When we survey those regions of the earth, where the light of Truth has not yet penetrated, inhabited by millions of immortal beings who are successively passing into eternity; what daily cause have we to bless God, that our lot has been

cast in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths; a land, where his ministers are appointed to proclaim the Gospel of peace; where we are governed by equal laws; and where we enjoy the blessing of civil and religious liberty.

O! that we may not, by our wilful and continued ingratitude, provoke our God to withdraw these blessings from us. As a nation, we have long enjoyed his peculiar favour; and as a nation, we are unmindful of his benefits. By his present dispensations towards us, He calls to us, in mercy, to consider our ways. But, if his call of mercy be disregarded, he will speak with a voice of judgment, which shall cause the stoutest hearts to tremble.

The Almighty has put a singular honour upon his Church, not only by imparting to it his blessing, and causing it to reflect his glory, but by rendering it the *medium*, whereby his perfections are more fully known to the angelic host. In heaven, they behold one unbroken stream of love: in hell, one unmixed torrent of wrath. But, in this our world, the seemingly opposing attributes of justice and mercy, are displayed in all their glory at the cross of Christ.

This wonderful truth is mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus

Christ: to the intent, that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known *by the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God."

Can we be indifferent to this mystery of grace? Can we treat with lightness these wonders of redemption, which occupy the highest thoughts, and call forth the loudest praise, of principalities and powers in heavenly places? Could angels weep, surely, tears would be shed in heaven over the insensibility of man.

To display this redeeming grace to a dying world, was at once the labour and the delight of St. Paul. The Godhead of Christ, his atonement, resurrection, and glorification, constituted the grand subjects of his preaching. He was truly a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom.

This wise master-builder did not exalt Christ on the ruins of the Moral Law, nor raise human works to an equality with the righteousness of Christ. He did not magnify the sovereignty of God to the disparagement of his holiness, nor lower the claims of justice to enhance the charms of mercy. In the beautiful harmony of truth, he so revealed the divine perfections, that with David we are led to exclaim: "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Having received the Gospel by the revelation of Jesus Christ, he saw and proclaimed the glory of the cross, whereby God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly; faithful and just

to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we desire that our faith may be kept from faultering, we ought to be always upon our guard against every opinion, the drift of which is to lower the Author and Finisher of it: because every thing that tends to lessen our Redeemer's glory, and to detract from what he has done for us, weakens our faith, unhinges our hope, and destroys our confidence. Therefore, as we should avoid those as the spreaders of the most dangerous plague, who would reduce our Saviour to the *low rank of a creature;* so we shall be afraid of partaking of the infectious leaven of such as would bring us off from looking for our salvation from Christ alone, and would persuade us to expect *that* from our faith, repentance, sincerity, and obedience, which was procured for us by his agonies, toils, and death. And, at the same time that we are exalting Christ to the utmost, we should avoid the extreme of those, who, under pretence of magnifying our Saviour's infinite merit, pretend to a liberty to act as they will; because whatever swelling words we may speak, we do not sincerely trust in the infinite merit of the sacrifice of our Lord offered up as our Priest, unless we manifest the sincerity of our faith, by submitting to him *as a King.*

"It shows that persons have no desire to be saved by Christ, when they take pains to degrade him.

"None can better judge of his worth, than those, who having washed their robes in his blood,

and by his aid, passed through great tribulation, are brought to behold his face in righteousness. They suffer no diminishing thoughts concerning him to find the least harbour in their spotless breasts; but, in the company of angels and archangels, with the highest strains of rapture, praise and adore him.

"As long then, as Christians are travelling through the dark and gloomy vale of life, they should not be backward to ascribe the highest honours to him who was slain, and has redeemed them to God by his blood; which they will do without ceasing and weariness, when, passing out of time into eternity, they shall come to be for ever with the Lord in the peaceful realms of light and immortality, where faith will be turned into sight, and hope will be swallowed up in enjoyment."

"Jesus, the PROPHET of thy Church,
Whose word with heavenly wisdom glows,
Unveil our hearts, direct our search,
To gain the knowledge it bestows.

"O let thy solemn call awake
Each soul to penitence and prayer,
The chains of sin and error break,
And write thy sacred precepts there.

"Jesus, our PRIEST, whose boundless love
Has made atonement for our guilt,
And now before the throne above,
Offers the blood which thou hast spilt.

"To us, thy pow'r and love reveal,
Thy pardon to our souls convey;
Their fears remove, their sickness heal,
And wash their deadly stains away.

"Jesus, our KING, with conqu'ring might
Ride on, thy glorious work complete;
Put all our enemies to flight,
And cast them down beneath thy feet.

"To every frail and feeble soul
New life and energy impart;
Teach us to bow to thy control,
And rear thy throne in every heart."

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF COMING TO GOD BY FAITH.

"LET thy mercies come unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation according to thy word." This spiritual breathing after holiness is the sure evidence of spiritual life. The general language of mankind is—"Who will show us any good?" It is not uncommon for persons to say—I have indeed many mercies:—good health, kind friends, a comfortable sufficiency, and every reasonable convenience.

These are mercies, when we consider how we have forfeited every blessing; and great mercies too, when rightly improved to the glory of the Giver. But many persons, who value these gifts of Providence, lightly esteem the transcendently higher gifts of grace.

So did not David.—He asks for mercies;—he feels his need of them; and says, "let them come unto me." But he specifies the nature of the mercies which he wants,—"even thy salvation."

David, as a mighty monarch, enjoyed the splendour of a court, but these were fading glories

in his eye, compared with that salvation, that everlasting covenant of grace and truth, which he declared to be all his salvation and all his desire.

The pardon of sin—peace with God—the sweet inward enjoyment of this peace—purity of heart—and the hope of glory, were the mercies which David breathed after, and which he entreats might come unto him.

David, it is true, was a pardoned sinner; but, on this account it was, that he felt the more desirous for the saving mercies of his God. Those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, will always be longing after another, and another taste, till they reach the fountain-head of blessedness. This thirsting, this panting, this restless aspiration after God is a sure proof of a heaven-born—heaven-directed soul. O that we may experience this stretching forth of the affections toward the blessed Jesus, this ardent desire after his salvation, which holy Paul so eminently exhibited in his preaching, his practice, and his prayers. While his whole soul was engaged in the glorious work of magnifying Christ, his heart's desire and prayer to God continually was, that sinners might be saved.

In the life of this distinguished Apostle, we have seen embodied, all those doctrines and precepts, by which Infinite Love is pleased to regenerate the world.

Fearing neither contempt nor scorn, he boldly proclaimed:—the love of God the Father, in the gift of his Son—the love of God the Son, in dying

for our sins—the love of God the Holy Ghost, in sanctifying the sinner through faith in his blood. By sweet experience he knew the blessedness of saving faith. He lived under its influence, and manifested its power.

When writing to the Hebrew Christians on the nature and effects of faith, which wrought such wonders in the patriarchs and saints of old; he makes this important declaration: "He that cometh to God, must believe that *he is*, and that he is the rewarder of them that *diligently seek him*." How comprehensive are these words. May the Divine Spirit write them in all their fulness upon our hearts. Then shall we know him, whom to know is life eternal.

"He that cometh to God, must believe that he is:" that he is self-existent, immutable, eternal; the great I AM, the incomprehensibly glorious JEHOVAH: that he is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness; infinite in holiness, justice, and truth; infinite in love, mercy, and grace; yea, infinite in all his perfections; infinitely happy in Himself, and the source of happiness to all his creatures.

He that cometh to God, must believe, that he is the first great cause, the Almighty Creator of all things, visible and invisible; and that as he made all things, so by Him all things consist.

He must believe, that God is the Righteous Governor of the universe, ruling all his creatures in wisdom, and over-ruling all events, persons, and things to advance his own glory, which is the ultimate design of all creation.

He must believe the revelation of the Divine Mind and Will as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and receive the declarations of Jehovah in a spirit of humility and profound subjection of the understanding; and with the simplicity and teachableness of a little child.

He who thus comes to God by faith, and believes the revealed word of His Truth, will be deeply humbled at the sight of himself, as a fallen, polluted creature; lying under sentence of condemnation, and obnoxious to infinite justice.

He will see in the page of God's Word, that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing; that he cannot by any natural strength of his own, prepare himself to turn to God, or to do good works; that this inability, being altogether of a *moral* nature, consisting in the alienation of his affections, and the aversion of his will from God, renders him an object of divine displeasure, and an heir of hell.

He will therefore acknowledge the justice of that awful sentence which God hath pronounced: "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and will lie in deepest self-abasement before the offended Majesty of heaven, crying with the publican: God be merciful to me a sinner.

He that cometh to God will believe with inexpressihle delight His revelation of grace and mercy: that through the atoning blood and righteousness, through the exaltation and intercession of Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, sinners are redeemed from sin and hell, and made the heirs of eternal glory.

He will, therefore gladly receive Christ into

his heart by faith, and love him in sincerity and truth. He will receive Jesus in all his saving offices, and embrace him in all his endearing characters, of surety, advocate, physician, shepherd, friend, and guide. He will admire the suitableness of those images, by which the value of the Redeemer is set forth,—as:—

The way to the Father.

The door into the Gospel-fold.

The true vine, communicating life to the branches.

The bread from heaven, sustaining the believing soul.

The foundation, on which the Church is built.

The fountain, opened for sin and for uncleanness.

The light, to illuminate the world,—and, the life, to animate the whole body of the saints.

He will behold Jesus as the Alpha and Omega, the all and in all, that is needful for salvation. He will clothe himself with the garment of his Redeemer's righteousness, prepared by infinite love for perishing sinners, in which alone he can appear with acceptance in the presence of unspotted holiness.

He that cometh to God, will likewise believe, and receive, all that the Bible reveals respecting the divine nature, offices, and work of the Holy Spirit. The believer knows that all is dark and dead, until the Spirit shine into the heart, and by his creative power, form the soul anew in Christ Jesus: he will, therefore, pray for the Spirit, as

the promise of the Father, and the gift of the Son, without whose Almighty energy on his soul, he can neither repent, nor believe, nor love. He knows that the very desire after the indwelling of the Spirit, is the dawning of his grace; and he is thereby encouraged to follow on to know the Lord.

Thus fresh light breaks in upon his mind, through the daily exercise of believing prayer, and the study of the Scriptures; a flame of love is kindled in his breast; his repentance becomes more deep, and his faith more vigorous.

He now devotes himself to the cause of his Redeemer, and labours to renounce the world in its principles and practice. He dares to be singular, and seeks for strength to crucify the flesh, to resist the devil, to take up the cross, to deny himself, and to follow Christ.

He now rejoices in the hope of glory, and though often in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet his consolations are neither few nor small, while he looks through the veil, and anticipates the joys above.

Such were the views and feelings of St. Paul, and such, through the Spirit, will be our experience, if our hearts are given to Christ, and repose in faith on his atonement.

The great design of Divine Revelation is to make us acquainted with God and ourselves.—This knowledge is intimately connected with our well-being, both in time and eternity. Faith, in a revealed Saviour, purifies the heart. Love, to a

crucified Redeemer, produces universal obedience.

As self-examination is daily needed, the Christian reader will frequently put to his heart such questions as these :—

On what have my thoughts been mostly engaged this day? About God or the world? Have I carefully embraced every opportunity of meditating upon Christ, and his precious salvation?

Whilst engaged in my lawful calling, have I laboured to keep my heart from a growing attachment to earthly things, by frequent ejaculations, and fervent desires after spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace?

Have I this day been troubled with *evil thoughts?* What reception have they met with? Did I indulge, or instantly resist them? Were they pleasing or bitter to my soul?

Have I this day been blessed, through grace, with *holy thoughts?* Did I cherish them, and pray for their continuance, and carefully avoid whatever might cause the sweet influences of the Spirit to be withdrawn from me?

Do I feel myself daily more humbled under a growing conviction of my own sinfulness? and does a sense of my unworthiness make me more patient and meek under provocations?

Do I feel *self* more annihilated; the fleshly appetites more subdued, and all my affections more spiritual than once they were?

Is Christ becoming more precious to my heart, and more lovely in my eyes? Have I clearer views of his person and offices;—and a

more experimental acquaintance with Him, as my advocate with the Father?

Can I esteem all things as dross, in comparison with Christ Jesus my Lord? Can I cheerfully surrender all earthly good, rather than Him, who is the chief-good,—my only hope of glory?

Am I as fearful of offending God in thought, and in *secret*, as I should be of grieving valued friends, by words and outward actions? Do I continually live, as seeing Him who is invisible? Is the love of God the governing principle of all my actions? Can I trust Him at all times and in all places? Do I live to him, who died for me? Is Jesus my portion, as well as my pattern;—my propitiation, as well as my protection? Am I as desirous to live under his rule, as to be saved by his righteousness?

Remembering the end of speech, do I carefully avoid all vain, unprofitable, and idle words? Is my speech always with grace? Do I delight to talk about the love of Jesus, from a *heart-felt love* to Jesus, and not from a vain desire to obtain, even a good man's commendation? Have I a single eye in all I do, aiming simply at the divine glory, and the good of souls? In this spirit, do I speak affectionately of Jesus to his enemies, as well as to his friends? Do I avoid all slanderous and detracting,—all peevish and unkind, expressions;—studying to render religion pleasing to others by an affable, sincere, and courteous behaviour?

While labouring to fulfil those duties which devolve upon me in the various relations of life, are the graces of the Spirit visible in my walk and

conversation? Does precept ripen into action? Is Gospel holiness the element in which I live;—are the commandments of Jesus the road in which I walk?

Knowing that offences must come, am I living in the exercise of watchfulness and prayer, lest Satan should draw me aside from the paths of purity, or tempt me to embrace unsound doctrines and wild speculations, which subvert the Truth of the Gospel?

Have I this day meditated upon the shortness of time—the nearness of death and judgment—the awfulness of eternity—the joys of heaven—the miseries of hell?

Do I continually fly to Jesus for the pardon of my sins; for grace to renew my nature; for peace with God; and hope of glory? Have I sought opportunity for secret prayer, and was my soul drawn out to Christ in this holy exercise?

Is the Bible my treasure? Do I read it every day with earnest prayer, for divine illumination to understand its truths; for faith, to rely wholly upon the precious promises made to me in Christ Jesus; and for a heart to love and practise its holy precepts?

Do I feel a lively concern for the spiritual good of my beloved friends and relatives; for all my neighbours and fellow-countrymen; yea, for all mankind? Does this concern evidence its reality, by causing me to use those means which are calculated, through grace, to do them good? Do I speak a word in season to those who are near; and aid

such societies, as are formed for the purpose of benefiting those who are afar off?

Like St. Paul do I remember the poor, and visit the abodes of misery and want? Above all, do I imitate HIM, who went about going good; and who for our sakes, emptied himself of all, but Love?—Have I this day, poured the oil of gladness into any drooping heart—or spoken of Jesus to any heavy-laden soul?

Do I pray much for the prosperity of Zion; for the enlargement of its borders; for an increase of faithful pastors; for a more abundant out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon all the churches of Christ throughout the world? With the Apostle, do I yearn over perishing sinners? With him, am I lost in wonder, love, and praise? While contemplating my own precious privileges, do I stand amazed at the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of free, sovereign, everlasting love, and exclaim with feelings of liveliest gratitude: *why me—Lord, why me?*

How dangerous is self-deception; how awful the condition of those who speak peace to their souls, when there is no peace; who go on in undisturbed repose, till hell opens its mouth to receive them. O my God, preserve thy servant from this fatal state. Open my eyes to see my true condition. Suffer me not to rest in a false security,—or to build upon a false foundation. Reveal to me the way of salvation. Give me an experimental knowledge of divine things. Show me the fountain of grace, that I may go in faith, and with joy draw water out of the wells of sal-

vation. Give me a deep view of the evil of sin; that I may discover its deceitful workings—guard against its destructive influence,—and, with unsparing hand, tear the twining mischief from my heart. Manifest thyself unto me, O thou bleeding Saviour, as thou dost not unto the world. Unite me to thyself, and make me wholly thine.

A speculative knowledge of the Truth may make us moral; true spiritual light alone can make us holy. When Jesus shines into the heart, the quickening influence is soon discovered, by the heavenly fervour of the affections, and by the holy character of the life. A dead formality may satisfy the worldling, but such a powerless profession can never draw from Christ, either strength or consolation.

Lectures on virtue and morality may teach us how much the dignity of human nature is debased by acts of meanness, and the grosser stains of sensuality: but they cannot renovate the soul. The moralist tries to appear humble and disinterested, knowing, how much beauty is imparted to the character by these admired principles: but pride is easily discovered through the thin veil of false humility, while self appears through a thousand crevices which he is unable to conceal. Though hid among the leaves and flowers of Eden, the spear of truth discovers, by its powerful touch, the artful enemy of mankind.

> " . . . . no falsehood can endure
> Touch of celestial temper, but returns
> Of force to its own likeness. . . . "

Satan and his works shrink from the light and power of Truth.

Whatever may be our outward condition, St. Paul has abundantly testified, that man is naturally proud and self-righteous. Some, like the Athenean sages, seek from science and philosophy all that is needful to illuminate their minds, to direct their steps, and to fortify them against the ills of life. These wise ones of the earth, despise the Gospel method of salvation. Yet, with all their knowledge, they cannot attain true happiness. They feel an aching void within, and stumble at noon-day, as in the dark: for truth and experience both unite in the Apostle's declaration—that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Such is the state of all, who deny the divinity and atonement of Christ; and of all who seek to obtain heaven by a righteousness of their own.

When Joshua was old and stricken in years, the Lord said unto him: "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." And does not the Lord say the same now, to every Christian, whether young or old? If we survey that exalted standard of perfection, which is set before us in the Scriptures;—and then, turn our eyes inward, and see what progress we have made in faith, and hope, and charity; the review will fill us with deep humiliation. With shame we shall lament our slow advances in the divine life, and be compelled to confess, that still there remaineth very much land to be possessed.

It is no mean evidence of the divine origin of the Bible, that it is the only Book which restores

man to the true dignity of his nature; for the Bible alone reveals the way, by which we can regain that holy image which was lost at the fall. When compared with Christian holiness, how miserably low is the standard of the world's morality. As the meanest plants and animals are of quickest growth, so are the world's Christians. A man may be a saint in the estimation of the world, who has never set his foot upon the sacred ground of Christian graces:—How carefully then should we guard against all those standards of perfection, which are devised by fallen man.

God in Christ is the glorious object which St. Paul, through the Spirit, sets before us. Let us with the Apostle turn our eyes from the creature to the Creator;—from the saint to the Saviour;—from polluted dust and ashes, to infinite excellence and beauty.

While in his carnal state, *self* is the pivot on which the sinner moves; and the circle which he describes is formed by selfish motives, selfish principles, and selfish aims.

But, when the Spirit, by an act of grace, places him upon Christ, as his *centre*;—how wonderful is the change! On every side he beholds nothing but infinite purity and unbounded glory. All the powers of his soul are absorbed in the greatness and grandeur of redeeming love. Self is abased and subdued. Christ is exalted and glorified. Pride is nailed to the cross; and humility clothes his spirit with the beauties of holiness. The contending sinner now lays down the weapons of his rebellion. Through faith in the blood of

Jesus, he obtains pardon and peace. The stormy conscience is quieted.—The rugged disposition is made smooth.—And heaven, in all its foretastes of joy and purity, is brought down into the soul.

"O could we but awake to see
The glories of the skies,
What a mean thing this earth would be
How worthless in our eyes.

"Remove, O Lord, the veil away
That hides thee from our sight;
Shed on our hearts a quick'ning ray,
And make our darkness light.

"Give us the eye of faith to see
The wonders of thy love;
And let our souls, renew'd by thee,
Be fix'd on things above.

"So shall a treach'rous world no more
Our wayward hearts ensnare;
Above its follies we shall soar,
And breathe a purer air.

"Pressing to reach the heav'nly prize,
We will pursue thy way;
Till the last cloud that dims our eyes
Melts at the op'ning day."

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE GLORY OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. AWFUL SIGNS OF THE TIMES; AND THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY. APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF HEAVENLY FELICITY.

THE religion of Jesus presents to our view every thing lovely and tender;—every thing exalted and heavenly.—It imparts peace and joy to the mourner in Zion;—health and strength to the sin-sick soul. The carnal mind is enmity against this blessed dispensation of mercy;—and why?—because it strikes at the root of sin; demands a separation from the world; requires the homage of the heart; the subjugation of the will; the concentration of the affections. This aversion proves beyond doubt, the fallen state of man, his guilt, and unfitness for heavenly felicity.

True holiness consists in a likeness to God;—true happiness in a nearness to Him. But, by nature, we are unlike to God, and are therefore unholy. Through original sin, we are placed at an infinite distance from Him, and are therefore unhappy.

Man, in his natural state, may derive a low

sort of delight from animal gratifications; or, a more refined pleasure from intellectual pursuits: but he is a stranger to real happiness, while separated from Christ, and unacquainted with Him as the HOPE OF GLORY. How decided on this point is the inspired Apostle: "Now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were *far off* are made *nigh* by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace."

The Gospel, when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, through the wonder-working power of God, can make the proud, humble,—the selfish, disinterested,—the worldly, heavenly,—the sensual, pure. The cross of Christ is the sovereign antidote to the evils of the fall;—the glorious exhibition of the wisdom and grace of God. The great Apostle of the Gentiles gloried in the cross of Christ. He prized it above all earthly treasures. He extolled it in the face of a sneering world. Christ and Him crucified was the Alpha and Omega of all his addresses—the fountain and foundation of his hope and trust.

We have seen his courage, in declaring Christ —the despised Nazarene, to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God. We have heard his noble declaration: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We have witnessed his consolations, derived from a firm reliance on the atonement. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement." We have beheld his last conflict and support: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.

O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory?"

How great is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh.—What rays of glory encircled the cross of Christ:—a dying thief was saved;—the sun was darkened;—the earth did quake;—the graves were opened;—the bodies of the saints which slept arose;—the veil of the temple was rent in twain;—the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers. When Jesus said: "It is finished," and bowed his head and died;—the law was magnified;—justice satisfied;—all heaven rejoiced;—and hell trembled to its base. Then did the seed of the woman bruise the serpent's head; then did Christ, through death, destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; then was the Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering. Jesus, the Almighty Saviour, burst the barrier of the tomb, ascended up on high;—led captivity captive;—and gave gifts unto men, even to the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

O my soul, canst thou hear these dying words of thy beloved Saviour, and not feel the deepest sorrow, mingled with the greatest joy?—Sorrow, at the remembrance of thy sins, which were the very nails that wounded, the very spear that pierced, his spotless soul;—Joy, at the assurance, that he died for thee—that he loved thee—that he gave himself for thee, notwithstanding thy vile ingratitude and unbelief. Hasten to his cross—cast thyself at his feet; pour out thy heart before him; tell him all thy wants; supplicate his mercy;—till

he give thee the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

What infinite mercies flow down to our ruined world through the cross of Christ.—The Father is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake.—Jesus sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.—The Spirit gathers his scattered sheep into the Gospel fold. Blessings of every name cluster around the sacred cross.

"*The death of Christ* is the centre, through which, all the lines of Evangelical truth must pass. It is the soul which must vivify the whole system of Christian Doctrines. It is the blood which must circulate through the whole body of Christian Duties. It is the sun which must enlighten the whole world of practical godliness.

"Here then, by the cross, the Christian Watchman stands, and looking backwards, he sees the counsels of everlasting love to save mankind by Christ crucified:—looking upwards, he sees those counsels carried on towards consummation by Christ crucified;—looking forwards, he sees the same counsels completed in the everlasting salvation of sinners by Christ crucified.

"Here, he stands, and looking on every side as far as the eye of faith can reach, he sees all the events of time, all the sons of men, and all the kingdoms of the world, ministering to the plan of salvation by Christ crucified. For all the course of Providence, all the lights of prophecy, the desires of all nations, the hopes of all mankind, the eyes of all angels, are fixed on Christ crucified. All Scripture is illustrated, sinners are saved, Di-

vine dispensations are consummated, God is chiefly glorified by Christ crucified.

"Here stands the Christian Watchman, and like the angel in the Apocalypse, standing in the sun, he stands amid the radiant splendours of the Divine perfections, and wishes for an angel's tongue to proclaim to all the world, how those perfections unite and shine in the eternal redemption of the world by Christ crucified.

"Viewing therefore the death of Christ in this comprehensive and scriptural light, as including all essential doctrines, he determines with St. Paul to know nothing—to preach nothing—and to glory in nothing—save JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED."

Christian reader is a crucified Jesus thy theme, thy trust, and thy glory? If Christ be precious to thy heart, thou mayest well rejoice, for heaven, the habitation of holiness—heaven, the abode of happiness, shall be thy everlasting home.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous—but infinite shall be their blessedness.—However thorny may be the path they tread, there still remaineth *a rest* to the people of God. The world of glory is the *Christian's home.*

"Midst all the beauties that appear
In this fair world, where'er I roam,
One place to me is far more dear
Than all the rest; that place is home.

"There weariness expects repose,
And grief itself forgets to weep;
There a pure spring of comfort flows
To lull earth's saddest cares to sleep.

"But, there's a happier world above,
A sweeter rest beyond the skies;
Where peace for ever dwells, and love
Forbids one bitter pang to rise.

"Why should we mourn, though doom'd to go
Through troubles to that world of peace?
Why shrink from labour, when we know
Our home is near, where it will cease?

"O Saviour, who hast gone before,
A heavenly mansion to prepare,
Teach us to seek that happy shore,
And let our *dearest home* be there."

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." This was the dying testimony of Jacob to his surrounding children, of the faithfulness of Jehovah, and of his delight in the covenant of grace. The faith and experience of true believers are the same in every age. The foundation of their hope;—the source of their comfort is substantially the same.

The seed of the woman;—the seed of Abraham;—the virgin's Son;—Jesus Christ the righteous;—the Son of God;—the Saviour of the world;—was, and still is, the only refuge of perishing sinners, whether under the Patriarchal—the Mosaical—or the Christian Dispensation. While founded on this rock, the Church of God cannot be overthrown;—the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

With unwearied perseverance, St. Paul proclaimed this inspired truth: that, "God was *in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—With fervent zeal, he set forth Christ, as the glorious ob-

ject of faith, because in him only, God presents himself to our view as a reconciled God: and as he is no where to be found reconciling sinners to himself but *in Christ*, so, by Christ only we must come to God, to receive the blessing of reconciliation.

What a bright display is this salvation of the love and power of Jehovah. Surely it demands the cordial reception of every human soul. "The glorious company of the Apostles; the goodly fellowship of the Prophets; the noble Army of Martyrs; the Holy Church throughout all the world, unite in praising and adoring the Father, of an Infinite Majesty; — His honourable, true, and only Son; —Also, the Holy Ghost the Comforter."

O that every reader of these pages, from the fulness of his heart, may join in the universal chorus: —"We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord; All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein. To thee Cherubin and Seraphin continually do cry:— Holy, — Holy, — Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and Earth are full of the Majesty of thy Glory."

Who can withhold his praise, when God imparts his mercy? or, behold unmoved, the length, and breadth, of His redeeming love? The salvation which Christ wrought out for us, is a *righteous* salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. Through the Great Atonement, God can now be a just God and a Saviour;—just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.

It is a *free* salvation; freely wrought out; and freely offered to every needy soul. None, by any natural right, could demand it. Not all the works of man could purchase it. It is an unmerited, free, salvation; free for the acceptance of all, however vile, who sincerely seek for it through faith in the blood of Jesus.

It is a *sufficient* salvation. Here ample provision is made for the wants of every sinner, be what they may. Are we blind? here is sight. Are we helpless? here is strength. Are we polluted? here is purity. Are we condemned? here is pardon. Are we miserable? here is peace.

It is a *complete* salvation, commensurate with our necessities, providing every thing needful for present joy and future glory:—blood to atone;—righteousness to justify;—grace to sanctify.—Thus every believer is made complete in Christ, who is head over all things to his Church.

It is an *extensive* salvation. It reaches from Adam to the last believing sinner who shall stand upon the earth. Jacob was interested in it. David called it his portion. Simeon gloried in it;—and all the saints in every age, like Mary, have rejoiced in God their Saviour.

It is an *everlasting* salvation. Jesus will not draw his people to himself to-day and cast them off to-morrow. How comforting are the words of Samuel: "The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." Equally consoling are those of David: "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his

inheritance." The promise, like the PROMISER, is vast and glorious: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

It is a *great* salvation. Ask the rich man in hell, and he will tell you of the greatness of his misery. Ask Paul, caught up into paradise, and he will tell you of the greatness of his mercy. O how great is that salvation which has God for its author, and God for its end. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

It is a *precious*, a *glorious* salvation, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. It is the work of a precious Saviour; the purchase of precious blood;—the treasury of precious promises;—the portion of precious faith;—the way to precious blessedness in the presence of God and the Lamb.

For whom is all this grace and glory provided? For rebellious sinners, who, being without strength to recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, are without hope of ever escaping the damnation of hell.

On these lost souls, Infinite Love casts its melting beams; subdues their stony hearts; leads them in penitence and faith to the foot of the cross;—and *there* transforms them into its own most holy image.

Now, by an act of grace, they become the Lord's portion; the objects of his care; the children of his family. His eye is ever upon them. His ear is ever open to their prayers. His arm is

ever ready to defend them. Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father, claims them for his own. The Holy Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, takes up his abode within them. In heaven, a mansion is prepared for them. Soon they shall receive a crown of life, and be for ever with the Lord, in the perpetuity of bliss.

Seek then, ye humble followers of the Lamb, an assured interest in his great atonement.—Study the spotless character of your Redeemer, whose holy nature was free from every taint of sin; who, when on the earth, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who, from the cradle to the cross did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; and who, when ascending into heaven, left us an example that we should follow his steps. Pray for grace to bear his image,—to drink into his spirit,—to confess him before men,—to realize his presence,—to rely on his power.—With gratitude survey the extent of your mercies in that message of love, which the Great Ambassador of Christ was commissioned to convey to the Christians at Corinth: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come,—*all are yours*,—and ye are Christ's—and Christ is God's."

Standing on the summit of this lofty Pisgah, and overlooking the land of promise, may you catch the note of the enraptured Apostle, and sing from the fulness of your heart: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.—Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise

God, be honour, and glory, for ever and ever, Amen."

While thus devoting your every power to the service of the Redeemer; while thus living in the daily exercise of faith and love, the Triune Jehovah, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, will bless, preserve, and keep you. The Lord will mercifully with his favour look upon you, and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that you shall glorify him while on earth, and in the world to come, shall dwell with him in glory everlasting.

Till that blessed period arrive, the saints of the Most High must watch, and pray, and wrestle, and fight. The Church, though now militant, will ere long, be triumphant.

If Jesus said to the Pharisees—"O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" let us beware, lest we fall under the same rebuke.

While regarding the movements of Providence, with our Bibles in our hands, and the fear of God in our hearts, we shall be best prepared for whatever may befall us; and shall seek for grace to perform those duties, which are especially enjoined upon us in seasons of trial.

Isaiah complained: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people." Thousands in our day, will not see the hand of God in his afflictive visitations. They ascribe to second causes all that befalls them, forgetful of the Su-

preme Disposer of Events. Can we then wonder, if the storm thicken around us; if the thunders of divine vengeance wax louder and louder; if we are made to learn by judgments, the value of abused mercies.

May British Christians hear the rod, and Him who hath appointed it, for every thing around us calls for deepest humiliation. The judgments of God are abroad in the earth. His voice may be distinctly heard in the earthquakes of the East—and in the storms which have desolated the Islands of the West—in the predicted, and now experienced, distress of nations, with *perplexity*—and in the wide-spreading pestilence which has invaded our land. Out of the whirlwind the Lord is speaking in language too plain to be misunderstood: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the Heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

The machinery of divine vengeance is in motion. The vial of wrath is still being poured out on the seat of the beast;—and the crescent is fast waning on the brow of the Mahomedan Sultan.

The Almighty has also a controversy with his people. Divisions are permitted to rend the visible Church, and heresies, like hemlock, are springing up in the Gospel-field. "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than

a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, surely these are *poor;* they are foolish; for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the *great men,* and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God; but these have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds." Such was the state of Jerusalem, when Jeremiah uttered these effecting words. Happy would it be, did we not too much resemble the inhabitants of that devoted city.

As Matthew Henry remarks: "The poor were ignorant, and therefore they were wicked; for prevailing ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impiety. The rich were insolent and haughty, and therefore they were wicked. They knew their Master's will, but were resolved to have their own will, to walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes. The poor were *weak;* the rich were *wilful;* and so neither did their duty." "Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this."

Were a prophet commissioned, as in the days of old, to warn the inhabitants of our favoured isle, what message could be more appropriate than that which Zechariah delivered to the rebellious house of Judah: "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore, say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts. Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not

as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings; but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not *take hold* of your fathers? And they returned, and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways, and according to our doings, *so hath he dealt* with us."

Thus revolting from God, they felt the power of his wrath;—and returning to Him, they experienced the truth of his mercy.

As a people, may we also humble ourselves before our offended Creator. "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is, in all that we call upon him for?" And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as those which bless our land? Through the Gospel, we are lifted up to heaven in privileges and mercies; through the blessing of a free constitution, we can each sit under our own vine and fig-tree, none making us afraid.

But how have we improved these exalted favours? What returns have we made to our all-gracious Donor? Alas! we have not rendered unto the Lord according to his great goodness, neither have we been thankful. When Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked—and so have we. Prosperity has engendered pride; and pride is hastening on

our fall. The page of history bears testimony, that nations expire on the lap of luxury. The Word of Truth, declares, that, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people;"—the certain cause of their destruction. "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you;" was the appeal of Samuel to the assembled Israelites:—"but, if ye shall still do wickedly," said the faithful monitor, "ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

How important then are the duties which devolve, at this eventful crisis, upon the faithful servants of Christ. Their secret chambers should witness the fervency of their prayers in behalf of their king and country; while the world should witness their fidelity to their Saviour, and the blameless character of their lives. With unflinching constancy they should adhere to the Word of Truth, and be willing to part with any thing, and every thing, rather than with that BOOK of BOOKS, which contains the record of redeeming love—the foundation of heavenly hope—the promise of eternal life.

O that as a people, we may return unto the Lord our God; for we have fallen by our iniquity. "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. Let us then take with us words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him: Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips."

How deeply affecting are the compassions of our God: "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." How all-constraining is the power of redeeming grace: "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

The cloud which is now gathering around us is dark and portentous; yet let us not despond. On this darkened cloud, shines the bow of mercy. The faithful servants of Christ are feeling a new and divine impulse, which strengthens as the storm approaches—the Jews are beginning to enquire, and listen to the Christian advocate.—Gospel light is spreading in Heathen lands; the power of Truth is felt by savage tribes,—and Ethiopia is stretching out her hands unto God. Then let us rejoice. The Lord reigneth. His mercy endureth for ever. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.

Does stillness reign in the enemy's camp? Satan, knowing that his time is short, has come down with great wrath. This adversary to God and man is mustering his forces against Christ and His Truth. The spiritual contest is again renewed, a contest between light and darkness;—between the *true* Church and the world. *The Holy Bible is the object of attack.* Popery, with its *unchanged* principles, is striving to withhold from perishing millions the LAMP OF LIFE;—while infidelity, with floods of blasphemy, is labouring to extinguish the sacred fire. These enemies to the Truth oppose its progress; and shun the light by which their sophistries and superstitions are discovered and condemned.

The worldly-minded professor is alike inimical to the Word of God, however orthodox may be his creed, or pure the Church to which he belongs. Thus Satan, working upon the darkness of the mind, and the corruption of the heart, raises up a host of foes against the truth of the Gospel. By his power and subtlety, he may be permitted to create a storm; but, though severe the conflict:—TRUTH IS GREAT, AND SHALL PREVAIL.

A period then seems fast to be approaching, when Gospel principles shall be tried;—when the chaff shall be separated from the wheat;—when mere profession will vanish like the morning cloud;—and false brethren fall like withered leaves in Autumn.

Nothing will then abide the fiery trial, but the grace of God;—nothing will withstand the fury of the storm, but faith in Jesus.

Blessed are they who range themselves on the Lord's side, and who openly declare with Joshua: "If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve, but as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." Ye friends of Jesus, be not afraid. While men's hearts are failing them for fear, your Saviour bids you to lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. However violent may be the storm, he will hide you in his pavilion. However overwhelming to the wicked, you, like Noah, shall ride in safety over the boisterous waves.

The weapons of the world are carnal; but those of the *true* Church of Christ are spiritual. Faith and patience, prayers and tears, were the

only weapons which the persecuted saints of old wielded against their enemies, and with these they came off more than conquerors through Him who loved them, and gave himself for them. May we, like them, exhibit the strength of our principles, by patient endurance, and by an unshaken allegiance to Christ.

Under every opposition from the world, may our language be that of David to Saul: "The Lord be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand." However great the oppression, may we imbibe the spirit of St. Paul's exhortation: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written; vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Whatever be the tribulation, may we follow the command, and rejoice in the triumph and consolation of Jesus: "In your patience possess ye your souls." "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, fear not, neither be dismayed. Look within the veil, into the temple above, and rejoice at the glory presented to thy view. There Jesus reigns; and there, thou shalt join the heavenly host, and with all the redeemed Church, shall swell the chorus of adoring praise.

Confiding in the Saviour's love and care, the

weakest saint shall overcome, and bear the palm of victory. We may be called to suffer for Jesus' sake, but if we are *his*, our souls shall never perish, for none can pluck us out of his hand. By his judgments, the Lord may purify, but he will not destroy his Church. He may permit the boar of the wood to waste it, but the choice vine which his own right-hand hath planted, he will not suffer to be rooted up. "Return, we beseech thee, O God of Hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; so will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

How gracious is the answer of God to the believing, self-abasing supplications of his people: "In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

With holy Paul then be encouraged to persevere. His heart, under every trial, was stedfast, trusting in the Lord. Think on his sufferings—his supports—his final salvation. Meditate upon Jesus the Author and Finisher of *his* faith; and who, if you look to him, will be the Author and Finisher of *yours*. Through the power and grace of Christ, you, like the blessed Apostle, shall assuredly prevail. Then rejoice in the Lord, yea, sing for joy, while you mingle in spirit with the beloved disciple, who, when in the Isle of Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, was favoured with these visions of

heavenly glory: "I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven, and immediately I was in the spirit, and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne; and he that sat, was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

"And I heard the voices of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying, with a loud voice; Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

"After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and

power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen.

"And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world, are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

"And I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying; Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments.

"And again they said: Alleluia. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God, that sat on the throne, saying, Amen—Alleluia.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying: Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying; Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said;

Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, write;—for these words are true and faithful. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

O glorious Revelation of our ever-gracious God! And are these blessings about to be revealed in all the faithful servants of Christ?—Well might the enraptured Apostle declare: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is *gain*." Can we wonder that he had such a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, when he knew assuredly, that there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge would give him in that day, and not to him only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

With what delight should we soar above all earthly things. How anxious should we be, to have our station near the throne. "He which testifieth these things, saith, SURELY I COME QUICKLY." Oh! that every heart may reply: "AMEN—EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS."

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